THE MONSTER NAOYA INOUE

THE RING

JULY 2025

Sindalah, NEOM

Jeddah Historic District - AlBalad

Where two worlds make one

Discover More

Saudi RED SEA

VisitSaudi.com

#ThisLandIsCalling

Naoki Fukuda

42 DOUBLE JEOPARDY
NAOYA INOUE IS ALREADY DESTINED FOR THE HALL OF FAME, BUT HIS MOST THRILLING CHALLENGES MAY BE YET TO COME
By Tom Gray

50 A NEW BRITISH BREW
A FUTURE SHOWDOWN BETWEEN ADAM AZIM AND DALTON SMITH COULD HAVE THE INGREDIENTS FOR A PERFECT STORM
By Adam Smith

56 LA DOLCE VITA
NINO BENVENUTI'S CHARMED CAREER BROUGHT HIM OLYMPIC GOLD, MULTIPLE WORLD TITLES AND THE LOVE OF A NATION
By Lee Groves

60 FLOAT LIKE A BEE
SOME SEE RICHARD TORREZ JR. AS THE "AMERICAN HOPE" IN THE HEAVYWEIGHT DIVISION, BUT HIS MOTIVATIONS ARE MORE PERSONAL
By Thomas Gerbasi

66 EYE TO EYE
THE PRE-FIGHT STAREDOWN HAS LONG BEEN A FAVORITE TACTIC FOR FIGHTERS LOOKING TO GAIN AN EDGE
By Don Stradley

72 THE BOBCAT
THE STORY OF LIGHTWEIGHT CHAMPION BOB MONTGOMERY IS A TOUR THROUGH A GOLDEN AGE IN BOXING
By Nigel Collins

80 A TRIP TO LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT HELL
CELEBRATING THE 45TH ANNIVERSARY OF MATTHEW SAAD MUHAMMAD VS. YAQUI LOPEZ, THE 1980 FIGHT OF THE YEAR
By Randy Gordon

DEPARTMENTS

4 OPENING SHOTS
9 RINGSIDE By Doug Fischer
15 BERNSTEIN ON BOXING
By Al Bernstein
19 STEVE'S SOAP BOX
By Steve Kim
22 MY FIRST TIME
By Lennox Lewis and Anson Wainwright
26 BY THE NUMBERS
By Don Stradley
28 HOW TO WATCH BOXING
By Adam Abramowitz
33 RING RATINGS
85 FUNDAMENTALS By Ruth Raper
88 FIGHT DOCTOR
By Dr. Margaret Goodman
90 THE FACE OF BOXING
By Wojtek Urbanek and Thomas Hauser
92 COMMISSIONER'S CORNER
By Randy Gordon
94 FINISHING SHOTS
96 FIGHTLINE

Cover Illustration by Oliver Barrett

From Local Arcades to the World Stage:

Saudi's Fighting Spirit Shines Bright at the Esports World Cup

The lights beat down. The crowd's roar is a physical force. On stage, two figures are locked in intense concentration. Every movement is precise. Every second counts. The difference between triumph and defeat? Precision, nerve, and a world-class network.

Listen closely. There's no bell. No footwork. Just the rapid click of buttons and the glide of a thumb stick. This isn't your traditional ring; this is the electrifying arena of competitive Street Fighter at the Esports World Cup (EWC) in Saudi Arabia. Powered by stc group, this first-of-its-kind global gaming event is rewriting the playbook and showing that precision, discipline, and heart matter just as much in digital arenas as they do in the ring.

The Kingdom's investment in gaming is anything but recent. In 2024, the Esports World Cup stormed onto the global stage, raising the bar for digital connectivity and competitive play. Hosted in Riyadh, the inaugural tournament put up serious numbers: over 500 million viewers tuned in, watching over 250 million hours of content, making it the most-watched esports tournament of the year, with peak viewership hitting 3.5 million.

Behind that scale was stc group, an Elite and Founding Partner, powering the tournament's digital core. Our infrastructure, built for champions, featured high-performance servers for lag-free action, a 5G network that kept thousands of players online at blistering speeds, and systems engineered to crush latency. Because in esports, just like in the ring, milliseconds make champions. A dedicated stc crew worked round-the-clock, like a seasoned corner team, ensuring every connection held. At the heart of it all was the stc play Gaming Hall, transformed into a global arena hosting over 1,500 top players from more than 100 countries.

But this wasn't a sudden leap. Long before the bright lights of EWC, Saudi's gaming story was already unfolding. In the 1970s and 80s, consoles like Atari lit up living rooms. Informal markets made games widely accessible, often for just a few dollars, turning gaming into a shared social language.

The early years also sparked game localization and development, revealing a clear appetite for culturally relevant content. As internet access grew, cybercafes became gathering grounds for Saudi youth — spaces where communities formed, reflexes were tested, and rivalries took shape.

The 2000s marked a turning point. Saudi was entering the digital age, and digital enablers like stc group were laying the groundwork. Our rollout of essential infrastructure including DSL broadband around 2003, sparked the rise of internet gaming cafes — spaces where young Saudis came to belong, compete, and grow. These early proving grounds evolved into a national movement, setting the stage for today's esports champions.

The scale is staggering. According to PwC, Saudi Arabia is home to an estimated 23.5 million gamers - around 67% of the population This surge is powered by a youthful majority nearly 89% under 35, driven by a hunger for competition and immersive play.

At the heart of this scene? Fighting games. The digital dojos of titles like Street Fighter and Tekken — have long held a special place in Saudi gaming culture. They are more than button-mashers. They require discipline, strategy, and sharp reflexes — traits every boxing fan respects. Intense one-on-one battles and local rivalries were the early training ground. Today, with EWC spotlighting Tekken 8, Street Fighter 6, and Fatal Fury, that legacy has found a global stage, powered by stc group's world-class connectivity.

The rise of Saudi esports is not the start of something new. It is the echo of years spent playing, learning, and dreaming in arcades, cafés, and living rooms. Backed by Vision 2030, the sector is set to generate over US$13.3 billion and create 39,000 local jobs, with national investments already exceeding US$38 billion. This is a culmination, not a beginning. And with stc group powering the next era of play, the world now sees what has always existed here: a fighting spirit built to compete.

OPENING SHOTS

Former WBC middleweight titleholder Jermall Charlo (right) returned to action with a sixth-round stoppage victory over Thomas LaManna in Las Vegas. The 35-year-old Charlo, now campaigning at super middleweight, is looking for a big fight to close out 2025.

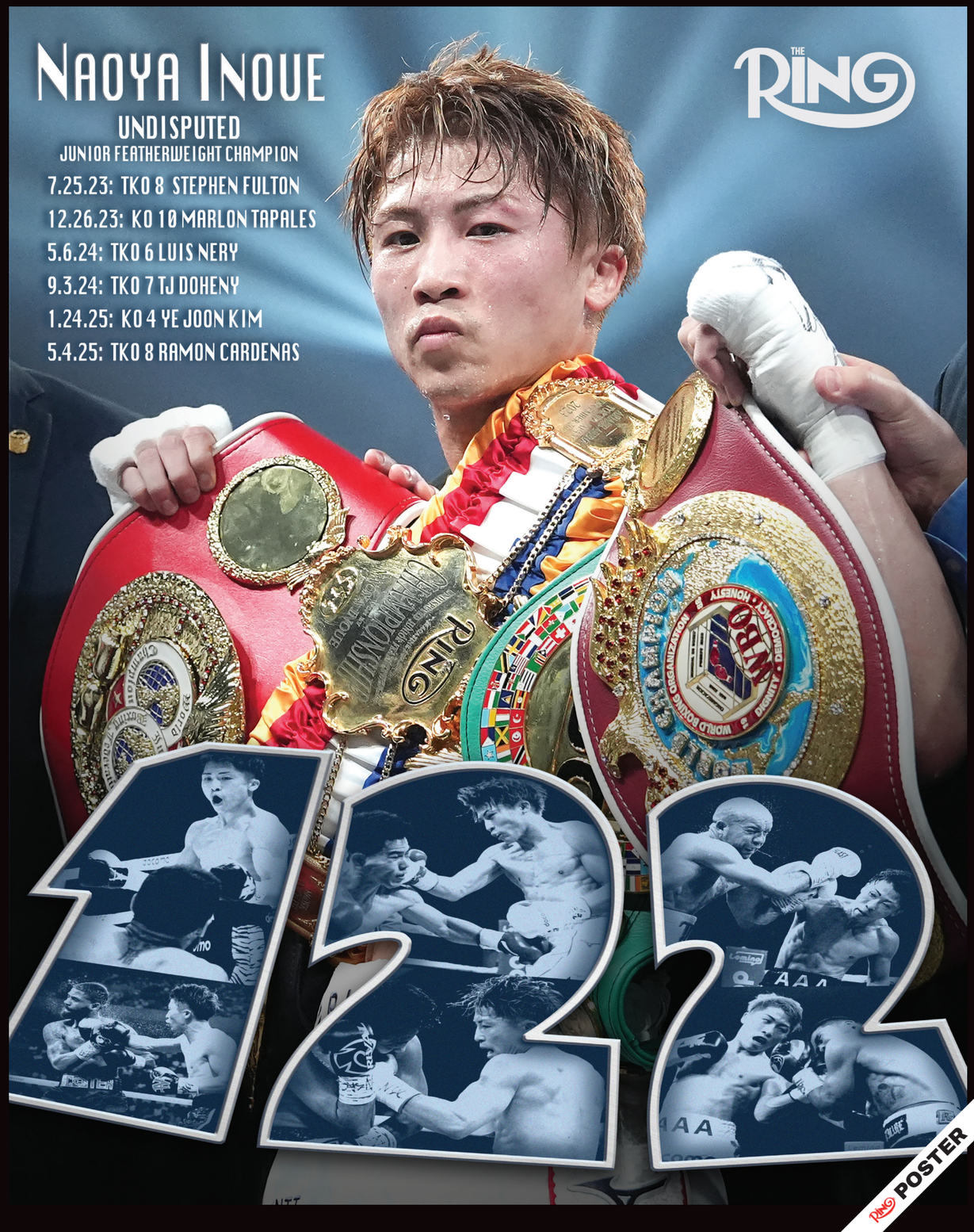
Steve Marcus

CORE
LIFE

UNLEASH THE POWER WITHIN

Ride. Rise. CORE.

VISIT WWW.CORELIFE.FIT OR CALL +966 9200 01223



Melina Pizano

THE RING

July 2025
Volume 102, No. 8

Founder
Nathaniel Fleischer (1888-1972)

Owner
His Excellency Turki Alalshikh

Editor-in-Chief
Douglass Fischer

Managing Editor
Tom Gray

Senior Editor
Brian Harty

Creative Director
Lamar Clark

Controller
Deborah L. Harrison

Subscription Inquiries
Back Issues Inquiries
Digital Orders Inquiries
The Ring Magazine
Subscriber Service Dept.
PO Box 16027
North Hollywood, CA 91615-6027
Phone: 818-286-3101
rngcs@magserv.com

Send Editorial Comments To:
comeoutwriting@gmail.com
or P.O. Box 90254
Brooklyn, NY 11209

THE RING (ISSN: 0035-5410) July 2025, is published 12 times per year by The Ring Magazine FZ, LLC P.O. Box 90254 Brooklyn, NY 11209. Postmasters: Send change of address Notices to: The Ring Magazine Subscriber Service Dept., PO Box 16027, North Hollywood, CA 91615-6027, Phone: 818-286-3101; rngcs@magserv.com. Single copy price $9.99 in U.S.A. ,10.99 Canada (£10.99 in the U.K.). Global Subscription price $60.00 for 12 issues plus S&H. Not responsible for the loss or non-return of unsolicited articles or photographs, which will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope bearing the proper amount of postage.

The entire contents of this magazine are copyright ©2025 The Ring Magazine FZ-LLC. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. Publisher is not responsible for the accuracy of the content of advertisements appearing in this magazine, nor the delivery or quality of merchandise or services offered. No endorsement of any such advertisement is intended or implied. Advertisers and agencies assume liability for claims arising from the content of their advertisements. FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRIES AND RATES: advertising@ringmagazine.com.

U.S. / Canadian and International distribution by Comag Marketing Group LLC, 155 Village Blvd #200, Princeton, NJ 08540. UK distribution by Seymour Distribution Ltd., 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, England, EC1A 9PT. Printed In USA and the UK.

RINGSIDE By Doug Fischer

RANDOM THOUGHTS

Manny Pacquiao, 46, is giving away 16 years to WBC titleholder Mario Barrios.

By the time this issue is on sale, Manny Pacquiao's July 19 ring return against WBC welterweight titleholder Mario Barrios will have just taken place in Las Vegas.

I didn't like the news of Pacquiao coming back against Barrios or that the WBC and Nevada State Athletic Commission sanctioned the fight. I didn't attend the June 3 press conference in Los Angeles, and as of this writing (early June), I don't plan on watching the fight live.

If the 46-year-old legend turns the clock back once more and upsets the 30-year-old defending beltholder, I will gladly watch it after the fact. However, if Pacquiao succumbs to Father Time, as he seemingly did in his last fight – a 12-round unanimous decision loss to Yordenis Ugas nearly four years ago – well, let me put it this way:

I've never seen Muhammad Ali vs. Larry Holmes or Trevor Berbick, or Sugar Ray Leonard's bouts against Terry Norris and Hector Camacho, or Roberto Duran's outings against Pat Lawlor, William Joppy and Camacho.

I don't think I need to explain why.

★ ★ ★ ★

The subject of boxers being overpaid and losing their ambition was a hot topic in the wake of the lackluster performances put forth by Ryan Garcia, Devin Haney and Canelo Alvarez on May 2 and 3.

Tim Bradley, who made healthy seven-figure purses vs. fellow Hall of Famers Manny Pacquiao and Juan Manuel Marquez, recently sounded off on what he views as complacency among a pampered generation of boxers.

"You want to get the most money possible, I understand that, but when you're overpaying these guys and they're not earning it, that's different," Bradley said during a guest spot on *The 3 Knockdown Rule* podcast.

"A lot of these guys ain't worth the money that they're being paid. They haven't worked their way up to get to that money. That's the problem. You're

just giving it to them for free and they're not showing up and performing.

"The character of the fighter has definitely changed. I just think these guys are a lot softer than what they were in the past. A lot of these guys just want, want, want, want, but they're not willing to give the sport something to be excited about."

Eddie Hearn, who promoted many of Haney's fights and co-promoted Garcia's fight with Luke Campbell, says too much money can spoil a young fighter's desire.

"There's an element of fighters being overpaid, and once you start making money, do you really want to put yourself physically in the trenches when your lifestyle is now fantastic?" Hearn said during an interview with FightHype.

"I think it's impossible to have the same warrior mindset when you've made a load of money and now you live in that 10-bedroom [mansion] and you've got three Ferraris. The [fighters] are like, 'I don't really want a war. Why would I want a war? No, thank you.'"

It was the late, great Marvin Hagler who said it's tough to get out of bed to do roadwork at 5 a.m. when you've been sleeping in silk pajamas. Bradley knows firsthand.

"The more money I did make over the course of my career – especially in the later half – the less and less I fought … [and] I became lazier. I'm not going to lie. I definitely became lazier because I'm a millionaire. I got money … Everything is all fine and dandy. You start doing less and less as you move forward. It's kind of natural. You have

For Hagler and Hearns, money was secondary to the glory.

to fight through becoming complacent.

"A lot of these guys are making a lot of money and they're making a lot of money early and they're making it fast. There's really no sacrifice. There's really no worry. Their second and third fight is already lined up, and it doesn't matter if you come into the ring and perform at your greatest or perform like crap. Similar to what Canelo did, similar to what Ryan Garcia did … even Devin Haney. These guys are not hungry, man. They're not hungry to prove anything, because they already got everything."

Co-host Steve Kim brought up the Marvelous One's adage: "So, you're talking about the old Marvin Hagler silk pajamas."

Hagler was indeed living large during the final stretch of his career. He was guaranteed $10 million vs. Thomas Hearns and $12 million vs. Sugar Ray Leonard, who was guaranteed $11 million for their 1987 superfight.

Eight-figure purses in 1980s money! Adjusted for inflation, ole Silk Pajamas was making close to $30 million for The Hitman and $33.7 million for Sugar Ray.

And yet those classic showdowns earned The Ring's Fight of the Year honors.

Leonard, the darling of the 1976 Olympics, commanded eight-figure purses in the prime of his career, scoring $10 million for his first bouts with Duran and Hearns (which would be in the $35-$40 million range today). The 1981 showdown with Hearns was The Ring's Fight of the Year. The Brawl in Montreal was the 1980 FOTY runner-up.

Leonard made $13 million for the rematch with Hearns, who made $11 million. They were "faded" veterans but fought their asses off for 12 rounds.

My heroes (as well as Steve's and Timmy's) did not suffer from complacency.

★ ★ ★ ★

Boxing with Mannix and Mora, a podcast co-hosted by DAZN broadcasters Sergio Mora and Chris Mannix, called The Ring's super middleweight rankings into question a few days before Caleb Plant faced Jose

EXCELLENCE IN CARE
STARTS HERE
حمل التطبيق
Download on the App Store
GET IT ON Google Play
EXPLORE IT ON AppGallery
د.سليمان الحبيب
DR SULAIMAN AL HABIB
medical group المجموعة الطبية

Caleb Plant was derailed by a rejuvenated Jose Armando Resendiz.

Armando Resendiz on May 31.

Going into the fight, Plant was ranked No. 4 behind champion Canelo Alvarez, Christian Mbilli (No. 1), Diego Pacheco (No. 2) and Osleys Iglesias (No. 3).

Mora and Mannix believed Plant deserved to be ranked higher.

Mannix, who seemed perplexed that Plant was "No. 5" (behind champ Canelo and three contenders), brought up a social media post the former IBF titleholder put out regarding his Ring ranking. The 32-year-old veteran noted that he's accomplished more than anyone in The Ring's top 10 apart from Alvarez. Plant's right about that, and there's no shame in losing to the 2021 version of the Mexican superstar or to David Benavidez, who held the No. 1 ranking when they fought in March 2023.

Plant, who lasted into the 11th round against Canelo and went the distance with Benavidez, won his share of the early rounds vs. both. Mora said those performances, plus a chilling ninth-round KO of Anthony Dirrell in 2022, merited the No. 1 spot in the rankings.

Mannix agreed and theorized that the Ring Ratings Panel placed Mbilli, Pacheco and Iglesias ahead of Plant based on their "potential" and unblemished ledgers.

"The only thing they have better than Caleb Plant is an undefeated record," said Mannix. "That's all they got going for them right now when stacked against Caleb Plant.

Not true. They've got activity. And, as my buddy Steve Kim loves to remind the boxing community, that matters.

Plant's been a once-a-year fighter since the loss to Alvarez. That's four bouts (counting Resendiz) since the start of 2022.

During that three-and-half-year period, Mbilli (28-0, 23 KOs) has fought eight times (with a bout scheduled for June 27 as we went to press), Pacheco (23-0, 18 KOs) has fought 10 times (with a bout scheduled for July 19), and Iglesias has fought nine times.

Plant was The Ring's No. 2-rated super middleweight following the Benavidez showdown. However, he didn't fight for more than a year following the loss, so he was dropped from the rankings. Beating Trevor McCumby last September got him back in the rankings at No. 4.

McCumby was unbeaten (28-0) but also unproven, and Plant struggled (including a fourth-round knockdown) before earning a ninth-round stoppage.

Mbilli, Pacheco and Iglesias have yet to face any world-beaters, but each has soundly defeated opponents equal to or superior to McCumby in recent years.

Mannix dismissed their opposition as he did Resendiz and the unheralded Mexican's chances against Plant. He then prophesied that Plant would make a "star turn" after stopping Resendiz and Jermall Charlo (who fought in the May 31 co-feature), which would set up a big showdown with Edgar Berlanga (whom he assumes will get past Hamzah Sheeraz). Mora said Plant would take over the 168-pound division once Alvarez retires and "dominate for two or three years."

Slow down, guys. Plant had his sweet hands full with Resendiz, who roughed up the proud stick-and-mover down the stretch of the 12-round bout to earn a split decision (that should have been unanimous).

I don't bring all this up to make Mannix or Mora eat crow. I respect both and enjoy their podcast. I'm just sticking up for the Ratings Panel, which rates fighters on performance and quality of opposition, not merely wins or losses.

Tevin Farmer is The Ring's No. 9-rated lightweight despite going 0-3 in his last three bouts. That's because Farmer arguably beat top contenders Raymond Muratalla and William Zepeda in 10-rounders last year and gave Zepeda hell in a 12-round rematch in March despite suffering an injured left elbow.

And the Ratings Panel hasn't turned its back on Plant despite him losing three of his last five bouts. He only dropped to No. 6, which I think is generous.

شركة جدة الإقتصادية
JEDDAH ECONOMIC COMPANY

IT SHOULDN'T NEED TO BE SAID

By Al Bernstein

PA - PA Images

In modern-day boxing, Naoya Inoue is as good as it gets.

Anyone who follows me on social media or reads this column is aware that I am not interested in pound-for-pound rankings. It just doesn't resonate with me, because in almost all instances the people on the list can't possibly fight each other, so we have no definitive way to test out whether someone should be ranked first or tenth. I fully recognize that my viewpoint is in the minority.

In recent years, the pound-for-pound rankings have become a very prevalent topic, especially on social media. Without it, fans would only be debating the merits of one fighter against another within one or maybe two weight categories. With pound-for-pound added into the mix, *all* boxers can be pitted against each other – and with the combative nature of boxing debate and of social media, that is exactly what happens. This debate is not just about pushing one fighter for a higher pound-for-pound rating. Inevitably it becomes about denigrating someone so your guy can be considered higher.

The prologue is here because I think this phenomenon explains the main topic of this column: the surprisingly polarized views that fans have (mostly in the United States) of Naoya Inoue. To me (a person unencumbered by pound-for-pound ratings), he is simply a terrific fighter who has shown greatness in winning titles over four weight divisions and providing excitement in the process. To many fans and even some alleged pundits, I suspect he is viewed as the guy whose achievements and reputation imperil the pound-for-pound status of their favorite fighter or fighters. That is really the only logical explanation I can come up with for the animus shown toward Inoue.

This column is absolutely *not* about comparing Inoue to other boxers in or out of any divisions within his scope. It is simply about dealing with what I think are often absurd attacks on his legitimacy as one of the most remarkable fighters of this time period. If I take you into the weeds in this endeavor, please bear with me; it is the only way to handle this. Let's deal with these attacks one by one:

1. He has fought a weak schedule. This one is often repeated because many fans seem to be unfamiliar with the facts. Over his 12½-year career, Inoue has fought 12 former, current or future titleholders in carving out a 30-0 record. Here are some highlights:

*At age 20 in only his sixth pro fight, he beat WBC junior flyweight titleholder Adrian Hernandez, who had defended his belt five times over two reigns.

*After one 108-pound defense, at only 21, he moved up to 115 pounds to beat formidable two-division titleholder Omar Narvaez for the WBO junior bantamweight belt. The rugged and crafty Argentine had only lost once – a decision to Nonito Donaire at bantamweight – in 46 pro bouts. Inoue knocked Narvaez out in two rounds.

*Inoue won the World Boxing Super Series bantamweight tournament by knocking out former beltholder Juan Carlos Payano and IBF titleholder Emmanuel Rodriguez (who had never been down), then winning an exciting 12-round battle with future Hall of Famer Donaire (who would win another world title in his next fight), in The Ring's 2019 Fight of the Year.

*He moved up in weight and dominated and stopped the acknowledged best junior featherweight in the world, Stephen Fulton. This made Inoue a four-division titleholder.

*Became undisputed junior featherweight champ by stopping Marlon Tapales, who had just beaten unified titledholer Murodjon Akhmadaliev.

Sprinkled in with these accomplishments were wins over other top contenders and former, current or future titleholders like Jason Moloney, Paul Butler, Jamie McDonnell and Ryoichi Taguchi (in only Inoue's fourth fight). I am sorry if some boxing fans don't have enough awareness of the lower weight divisions to know enough about all the opponents I have referenced, but that's on them, not Inoue. If they want to level the charge of weak opposition, then this is important information. Lest anyone think his schedule is weak moving forward, he is set to face Akhmadaliev in September and then will potentially battle WBC bantamweight titleholder Junto Nakatani in a fight for the ages. You can read in more detail about Inoue's potential future elsewhere in the magazine.

After being decked heavily by Ramon Cardenas, Inoue battered the challenger from pillar to post.

2. He never faced the great lower-weight threesome of Roman Gonzalez, Juan Francisco Estrada and Carlos Cuadras. Well, he was always a weight division or two above Estrada and Cuadras, and in 2016 Inoue's promoter made an offer to Gonzalez for a fight to unify junior bantamweight titles. Gonzalez turned it down because he said the financial terms were not to his liking. "Chocolatito" instead went on to face Srisaket Sor Rungvisai and lost his titles, then lost a rematch. That killed any thought of an Inoue fight, and Inoue moved up to bantamweight shortly after that anyway.

3. He was dropped in two recent fights by Luis Nery and Ramon Cardenas. Consider that both of these happened to Inoue in his *fourth* weight class, and Nery is known as a big puncher. Inoue got up and dominated Nery to stop him. Cardenas was the No. 1-ranked fighter by one of the sanctioning bodies going into this fight and had shown to anyone who bothered to look at his video that he was a very good fighter. He fought the fight of his life and still got stopped. Virtually every one of the all-time greats in the sport has been knocked down; many were stopped.

4. He has not fought in the U.S. enough. This is my favorite. The jingoism of American fans is on full display here. Seriously, why does this have anything to do with his worth as a fighter? For the record, he has fought in America four times. He has fought U.S.-based fighters a number of times. How many American superstars were loath to go to other countries to fight on a regular basis? Most. It's hard to justify fighting somewhere else when you are a superstar in your own country and fill arenas with ease. So you can argue whether this impacts his marketability as an international fighter, but it has no place in a conversation about how good a fighter he might be.

I'm here to tell everyone that it is absurd to not think of Naoya Inoue as a boxing star who is one of the best of his generation and will certainly be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame on the first ballot. Beyond those inescapable conclusions, feel free to debate the pound-for-pound issue or any others connected with him all you want. Advocate for any fighter you want and even say they are better than Inoue if you want. But please, just give this guy his due. He's earned it. RING

Naoki Fukuda

Saudia SKYTEAM

Fly Saudia to the world

STEVE'S SOAPBOX

A VERY ACTIVE RETIREMENT

By Steve Kim

Ed Mulholland

Pacquiao took a break from training to enjoy his induction in Canastota.

It wasn't all that long ago that I used this column to pen a glowing tribute to Manny Pacquiao and his induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame. It was certainly a well-deserved honor for the legendary "Pac Man." Not only was he a first-ballot inductee, but chances are that Pacquiao was a unanimous selection. But there is one small problem that has arisen: Pacquiao is no longer a retired boxer, which is stipulated as one of the prerequisites for getting inducted into the hall in Canastota, New York.

If you haven't heard by now, the most well-known senator from the Philippines is set to face WBC welterweight titleholder Mario Barrios on July 19 in Las Vegas. Yeah, that induction speech might've been a tad awkward with him looking back on his great career while promoting his next fight.

(For the record, Pacquiao is not the first Hall of Famer to come out of retirement and box. But it doesn't make this any less odd.)

Yeah, this is boxing being boxing. Comebacks are a tried-and-true tradition of the game. But unlike 15-round fights and rosin on the canvas, this one unfortunately remains in place. The last we saw of Pacquiao was in the summer of 2021, when he lost a clear-cut decision to Yordenis Ugas at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas. It wasn't that he looked particularly bad that night, but he did look, well, old. Not surprising, given that he was over 40 at the time.

The perfect ending would've been to walk away from the sport after his 2019 split decision over then-undefeated Keith Thurman, a victory that made him the oldest welterweight world titleholder in history at age 40. But boxing has very few happy endings and even fewer perfect ones. Nobody really knows why Pacquiao is returning to the ring. The assumption is that it's the money (it usually is), but one had hoped that he had more important things ahead of him, such as his duties as a politician in his homeland.

He has since participated in some exhibition bouts with kickboxers and the like. Quite frankly, those outings didn't inspire much confidence in his abilities at this advanced age.

Some are rationalizing the news by making comparisons to the past. What immediately comes to mind is the comeback of Sugar Ray Leonard, who came off a near three-year hiatus from the ring to face Marvelous Marvin Hagler for the WBC middleweight title

in 1987. Leonard shocked Hagler by winning a split decision in what was one of the defining fights of the 1980s.

WBC president Mauricio Sulaiman has defended his organization's decision to sanction the Barrios-Pacquiao title bout by using that contest as an example: "Remember Sugar Ray Leonard? My father, Jose Sulaiman, and the WBC were criticized for making his fight versus Hagler. Manny Pacquiao has been licensed by Nevada and passed all medicals and as a legendary WBC champion has been approved to fight by our organization. Let's talk [on] July 20th."

Hey, like father, like son, right?

As soon as the July 19 bout was made, the WBC ranked Pacquiao – who, remember, hasn't won a fight since 2019 – fifth in its welterweight rankings. Chances are if he were deceased, they might have named him the mandatory challenger in recess.

But there should be some context with the Leonard comparison. While it is true he was coming off a prolonged layoff, Leonard was just shy of 31 years of age when he returned to the ring. Pacquiao is closer to 50 than he is 40.

Invariably there will be comparisons to the late George Foreman, who made history by becoming the oldest heavyweight world titleholder in boxing history when he knocked out Michael Moorer in 1994 at the age of 45. But it has to be noted that from the time that "Big George" began the second chapter of his career in 1987, he fought at least once every year until his eventual retirement in 1997.

The most apt comparison is perhaps the WBC mandating that Kostya Tszyu face Julio Cesar Chavez (a personal favorite of the elder Sulaiman) for its junior welterweight belt in the summer of 2000. While Chavez was "just" 38, he'd been defeated soundly by fringe contender Willy Wise in October of the previous year and ended 1999 by stopping journeyman Buck Smith in three. Chavez was still a Mexican idol but an obviously diminished version of himself by the turn of the century.

Barrios (right) outpointed Pacquiao-conqueror Yordenis Ugas.

Beforehand, Sulaiman did his best to justify Chavez's position in the WBC rankings. Unfortunately, his faith in "J.C. Superstar" was not justified, as Chavez was crushed by Tszyu in six rounds at the Arizona Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Phoenix.

Now, this has to be stated: Pacquiao isn't exactly facing Thomas Hearns or even Donald Curry here. Barrios is a solid welterweight (ranked No. 3 by Ring Magazine), but the reality is that he'd be the heavy underdog versus unified Ring champion Jaron "Boots" Ennis and WBO beltholder Brian Norman. In his last outing back in November, Barrios had to come off the canvas and fight like hell to salvage a split draw against Abel Ramos. Pacquiao is picking low-hanging fruit to a certain degree.

Some will give Barrios no credit if he wins, but the last we checked, this is prizefighting. The reality is that this is a great opportunity for him to make a sizable payday against a notable name while actually having a real chance at keeping his belt.

The question here is: Can a 46-year-old Pacquiao defeat a 30-year-old Barrios? And if he can, what would that lead to? Who knows? This might actually be an entertaining bout. Besides, how many times can you see a current Hall of Famer in action? RING

Pacquiao is closer to 50 than he is 40.

Sarah Stier

srmg.com
Reach 165 million people across MENA.
Covering news, entertainment, travel, business, sports and fashion, our collection of iconic media brands focus on the evolving needs of today's audiences, resulting in unparalleled access to over 165 million people across the MENA region.
Partner with SRMG, the largest integrated media group in the region, and reach your audience today.
srmg

PA - PA Images

My First Time

by Lennox Lewis

as told to Anson Wainwright

More than 20 years after his final professional fight, Lennox Lewis remains one of boxing's most respected luminaries. The former undisputed heavyweight champion is a magnet for media and cameras. His wry-witted interviews are delivered with a laid-back accent that is the product of being born in London to Jamaican parents and moving to Canada as a tween, and his keen ringside commentary is an incisive addition to any live broadcast. Most importantly, his in-ring accomplishments still resonate deeply with fans who witnessed his career.

Lewis was defeated in the quarterfinals of the 1984 Olympics, but he returned with a vengeance – something he was later known for as a professional – in 1988, claiming the gold medal by halting future champion Riddick Bowe. Upon turning professional, Lewis embarked on a career that would see him run through a list of standouts from the 1990s and early 2000s – Donovan "Razor" Ruddock, Tony Tucker, Frank Bruno, Oliver McCall, Tommy Morrison, Ray Mercer, Shannon Briggs, Andrew Golota, Evander Holyfield, David Tua, Hasim Rahman, Mike Tyson and Vitali Klitschko, among others – and finish with a record of 41-2-1 (32 KOs), both losses avenged, to become recognized as the best heavyweight of his era.

THE FIRST TIME I LACED UP GLOVES

"It was actually at boarding school in England. I was about 11, 12. I wasn't in one of the regular city ones; I was in one in the country, south of London.

"I'm a rough kid myself; I'm coming from a rough upbringing. The kids that went to that boarding school were kids whose parents are getting divorced, they've got jobs and they've got a kid, now they need to put the kids somewhere while they sort out their problems. Rich kids – but they're bad.

"In the morning, we had one teacher, then another teacher in the afternoon, and we'd go through all the subjects. I was kind of considered one of the rough kids, and I would play rough, too, and the other kids weren't used to the rough play. Punching a guy in the arm and saying, 'What's up?'

"There was a teacher there who would see my roughness and talk to me about it. He said, 'I'm going to bring some gloves and teach you how to box.' He brought gloves one time, and my boxing was swinging. Now, looking back, he was basically allowing me to blow off steam. He would say 'Put on the gloves' and say 'Hit me,' but [he] knew how to protect himself. He was a big teacher; he looked like he weighed over 300 pounds. That was my first introduction to gloves and fighting."

MY FIRST AMATEUR FIGHT

"First amateur fight, I was around 15. My trainer used to bring as many of us that could fit into the car, like nine of us, down to Toronto. We would weigh in that day, see the doctor that day and fight that night.

"The first fight, I didn't know who the guy was; he went through the same routine I did and we were matched together, and I went in there and I hit him a couple of times and I floored him and won.

"What I remember about the fight was the first round was 'get to know you.' [The second was] 'try and punch your lights out.' And the third round was I was tired as hell and [it was] a matter of surviving and trying to hit [him], and [he's] trying to hit me and surviving.

"For my first 10 fights, my last round was the worst. And I got tired of having my last round as my worst, and I trained to make sure my last round was the best."

MY FIRST PROFESSIONAL FIGHT

JUNE 27, 1989

OPPONENT: AL MALCOLM

"First pro fight, I have the reputation of the Olympic champ. I remember my friend saying, 'Everyone is looking to get you because you're the Olympic champion.' And it's like they never got the chance to go to the Olympics, so it's like if they beat you, it's like them living the life as an Olympic champion. It was important for me to keep that title, knowing there's a lot of hype behind me, so I've got to

In June 1989, Lewis scored a routine second-round TKO over Al Malcom in his professional debut.

MY PERFECT PUNCH

November 17, 2001
Opponent: Hasim Rahman, in a rematch of a fight Rahman won by fifth-round knockout seven months earlier – The Ring's Upset of the Year.

"He was disrespectful, and that definitely lit a fire under me that was dwindling. It's like, 'This guy's being like this? This guy can't beat me.' I had to recharge and set that flame firing again and say, 'No, he's dealing with some disrespect.' It was important for me to beat him even quicker than he beat me. That was a thing I said to myself: 'I'm going to break that record; OK, he beat me in the fifth; OK, I'll beat him in the fourth' type of thing. The man's got my titles on loan.

"It was more of an adjustment punch. He put his hands out, and the whole dance of my movement walked him into that shot. I kinda danced and moved a certain way, and then I came with a swiping left hook and then a swiping right hand.

"It was a natural adjustment. I'm used to throwing the straight right hand, and the straight right hand wasn't working, but the looping right hand did.

"It's one of those punches where after it connected, I wished I could have connected harder. (laughs) It hit, the result happened (Rahman was knocked out in the fourth), and we had a great holiday after that. If you look after the fight, I said, 'I told you they were on loan!'

"Because of the sound and the fact [that] I laid him out right over the Don King crown [on the canvas], it was like taking another misfit out of boxing. The guy came in, he's rude, disrespectful – the man left South Africa (the location of the first fight) and didn't even visit [Nelson] Mandela after the fight. He just left. I went. After that, I went on safari, all [the while] thinking about the revenge, the rematch."

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk, and you can follow him on X @AnsonWainwr1ght.

defend it.

"It was a big fight; it was a big ordeal. I was in camp like five weeks with [trainer] John Davenport. The training camp was important.

"[I was] more nervous [about] the performance. I want to make sure I perform properly and everything goes well. Who's this guy? Don't know him. Don't want to get hit with no silly shots. Don't want to look bad.

"[On fight night,] I felt more anticipation, a little bit uptight. It goes away, but you're still in the moment. The lights are out there on you. When you look back, it's really just being relaxed – you're tense and your trainer is telling you to relax, which is the best thing for you, but you're not understanding it at that moment.

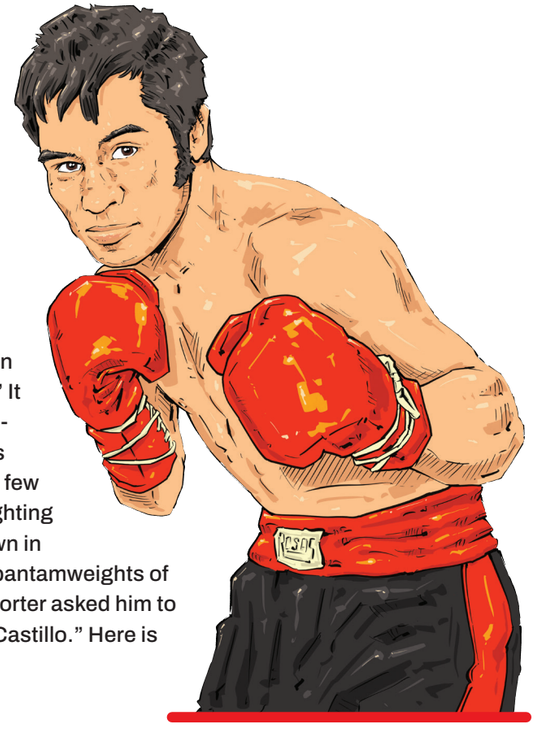
"He took a good shot and that shot hurt my hand. He wasn't trying to follow the script. That was his opportunity to prove himself. He's got a lot of fights, a lot more pro fights than I did. [Editor's note: Malcolm's record at the time was 11-12-1, 7 KOs.] It was my first. My script was trying to get rid of him as fast as possible.

"I caught him with a good shot [in the second round], and he folded to the power. Before, he didn't fold – got hit; he took it – but he's not going to be able to take more of those shots. I think it was an overhand right. Looking back at the shot, I never caught him with a perfect shot; it was more of a grazing shot, and I didn't know it was going to affect him like that. The result was he was on the ground." RING

BY THE NUMBERS:

Chucho Castillo

by Don Stradley • Illustration by KronkAAArt



A columnist for The Los Angeles Times once described him as “a two-fisted fighter with gold in his teeth, murder in his heart, and the sensitivity to pain of a tackling dummy.” It was a nice reputation to have, and Chucho Castillo (1944-2013) had earned it. With his Wolverine sideburns and his brilliant left jab, he took Los Angeles by storm after only a few contests at the Forum, having spent most of his career fighting in Mexico City. Born Jesús Castillo Aguilera in a small town in Guanajuato, the slick-boxing Castillo was one of the top bantamweights of his era. He knew it, too. Upon his arrival in America, a reporter asked him to name his boxing idol. Castillo smiled and said, “Chucho Castillo.” Here is his story by the numbers.

12 fights at the L.A. Forum »

When Jack Kent Cooke’s glamorous Forum debuted in 1967, promoter George Parnassus announced his plans to bring fights to the sparkling new venue. A longtime figure in Southern California boxing, Parnassus’ formula was to import popular Mexican fighters and make them stars in Los Angeles. Castillo’s turn came in June of 1968. Though there were questions about his exact number of fights and losses – it appeared the Castillo camp doctored some of the numbers – journalists remained curious about Parnassus’ latest discovery. After all, Castillo had a growing fan base south of the border and had recently won the bantamweight title of Mexico by beating revered veteran Jose Medel. “He would fight a bull with a fork,” a matchmaker said of Castillo, “and be a 6-5 favorite.”

Parnassus’ premiere main event at the Forum saw Castillo win a 12-round decision over the hard-hitting and highly ranked Jesus Pimentel. Castillo was dominant, reported the Times, handling Pimentel “in roughly the manner an elephant would a gnat.” Castillo returned to the Forum in August and scored a two-round TKO over popular Scottish bantamweight Evan Armstrong. In December, a rabid Forum crowd saw Chucho challenge the bantamweight champion, Lionel Rose of Australia. Castillo came out on the losing end of a 15-round split decision, but his name had been burned into the minds of L.A. fight fans as synonymous with slick boxing and courage. Castillo would fight nine more times at the Inglewood location, helping to make the Forum “Fabulous.”

1 riot »

Upon learning that Rose had defeated Castillo, the Mexican portion of the crowd commented on the scorecards by setting fires, destroying seats, and hurling bottles and chairs into the ring. Damage to the posh new site was estimated at $50,000 (about $460,000 in today’s money). Even referee Dick Young was struck on the head with a bottle and needed stitches. The discussion then moved into the parking lot, where several cars were torched or tipped over.

Parnassus wept as the nightmare played out. He’d been so proud to present the Forum’s first title fight, only to see it dissolve into mayhem. He vowed to quit the boxing business, but the “Golden Greek” couldn’t stay away for long. The fight itself was a close one, with members of press row evenly split between those who believed Castillo won and those who felt Rose had won. Presumably, they were polled while hiding underneath the ring to avoid flying trash.

44 rounds with Ruben Olivares »

When Olivares defeated Rose for the title in 1969, Parnassus matched the new bantamweight king against Castillo, kicking off one of the great Mexican rivalries of all time. Olivares was already a near-legend, with a record of 57-0-1, almost all his wins coming by KO. Their first bout, in April of 1970, was a bell-to-bell classic. Though Castillo scored the only knockdown of the fight, dropping the champion at the end of the third with a right to the chin, the night belonged to Olivares by 15-round unanimous decision. The Associated Press called the event “a remarkable chapter in boxing history,” but Castillo was frustrated at losing another title bout on points. The loss was especially heartbreaking for him because he’d dedicated the bout to his father, who had recently been killed in a road accident. But if Castillo felt snakebit, his luck changed when he battled Olivares again in October.

An accidental clash of heads in the first round caused a nasty cut over Olivares’ left eye, which Castillo targeted for the rest of the bout. On the doctor’s recommendation, referee Dick Young stopped the contest at 2:37 of the 14th, giving Olivares his first loss. Castillo had won the bantamweight championship on his third try, beating a future Hall of Famer in the process.

The Castillo-Olivares series was a display of contrasts. Chucho was a serious soul known for spartan training camps and avoiding the press (one of his nicknames in Mexico was “Old Sad Face”), while Olivares was a gregarious type who enjoyed a hard-partying lifestyle. Style-wise, Olivares’ high pressure, big-banging approach was a perfect complement to the more scientific Castillo. The pairing was also helped by rumors that the fighters disliked each other. The bad blood dated back to their days in Mexico, where Castillo claimed that he’d been more popular and that Olivares was merely a loudmouthed punk. “He makes me sick,” said Chucho.

To Parnassus, the duo meant money; a rubber match was made for April 1971. Olivares regained the title via 15-round decision, but Castillo managed to knock him down in the sixth and then, knowing he was behind on points, launched a desperate attack in the 13th. Still, Olivares won by wide margins on all three scorecards.

Though he was 1-2 in the series, Castillo’s part in the trilogy should be respected. He scored the only knockdowns and the only stoppage, and he was the first to defeat Olivares. Olivares, the great puncher, never came close to flooring Castillo. What kept Castillo up? Must’ve been all that hatred.

168 days as champion »

Prior to his unsuccessful defense against Olivares, Castillo fought only once during his brief time as the world’s top bantamweight. It was a non-title bout against Felipe Ursua in February 1971, and unsurprisingly it took place in Mexico. Before a supportive crowd of 15,000 in a Monterrey bullring, Castillo won his welcome-home bash by TKO in Round 6.

1 fight in Japan »

During the 1960s as boxing became more of a global sport, fighters began to travel more and take part in international events. And so it was that Castillo found himself in Japan on April 16, 1969, fighting to a 10-round draw with Ushiwakamaru Harada. Known as the bantamweight champion of Japan, Harada was the younger brother of Fighting Harada, the former flyweight and bantamweight champion.

66 fights »

Castillo finished his career with a record of 47-17-2 (23 KOs). He has the unique distinction of having the same number of wins by decision as by knockout (23 each, with a win by disqualification bringing his win total to 47). He struggled in his final years, as if the three bouts with Olivares had taken a toll on him. He lost to the likes of Rafael Herrera (whom Chucho had previously beaten), Enrique Pinder, Bobby Chacon and Danny Lopez. After losing a 10-round decision to Ernesto Herrera in December 1975, Castillo quietly disappeared from boxing. He was only 31, but he’d done enough for the business. With his competitive spirit, he’d helped lift the profile of Mexican fighters in America and had helped revive Los Angeles as a boxing capital. Castillo said he was his own idol, and we can’t argue with his choice. RING

HOW TO WATCH BOXING:
RING GENERALSHIP

By Adam Abramowitz

The Association of Boxing Commissions and Combative Sports (ABC) is a national association that provides standardized judging criteria for professional boxing. For those who used to watch HBO Boxing broadcasts, the network would list the ABC's four criteria used for scoring each round before every major fight. The criteria are:

1. **Clean and effective punching**
2. **Effective aggressiveness**
3. **Ring generalship**
4. **Defense**

Ah, the dreaded "ring generalship." What does it actually mean? How important is ring generalship compared to the other scoring criteria? And how should it be applied in close rounds?

Well, let's dig in!

On the ABC website, it defines ring generalship as:

"This is the thinking boxer. The boxer who, while punching or using clever footwork or moves, can keep their opponent off-balance. This is the boxer that has controlled the action, the boxer who, by using feints or slips, makes their opponent not only miss but then is able to put themselves in an offensive position. This is a fighter that puts themselves in position to score and not be scored upon. Running and simply avoiding action should not be rewarded."

Now, there's a lot to digest in this definition, especially when considering which boxer should receive credit during a contested round. And what components are most important? To help provide more context for ring generalship, I spoke with boxing judge and former referee Jack Reiss, who is an ABC official trainer. Reiss often leads ABC and sanctioning body seminars to help train officials in how to interpret

Al Bello

Floyd Mayweather Jr. (left) turned his fight against Robert Guerrero into a clinic.

and apply rules, and he has discussed ring generalship at length during his sessions.

Reiss has a four-pronged framework of ring generalship, which I'll get to in a moment, but as a key point, he wanted to emphasize ring generalship's relative standing compared to the other scoring criteria.

"What a lot of people don't understand," said Reiss, "is that there's a hierarchy. If Fighter A wins the round on clean and effective punching, then that's it. You don't need to consider the remaining criteria."

And if there's doubt as to who won the round based on clean and effective punching, the next thing to consider is criterion No. 2: effective aggression. Only when a round is still in doubt after applying the first two criteria should ring generalship be considered.

Here's Reiss's four-pronged framework for ring generalship:

1. **Ring control – Using punching, footwork or moves to keep an opponent off-balance.**
2. **Making an opponent miss but staying in the pocket to maintain an offensive position.**
3. **Achieving an offensive position without getting hit; hitting someone and not getting hit in return.**
4. **Running and/or clinching should not be rewarded if it's not leading to offense.**

The most important thing is the primacy of rewarding offense.

"If a fighter is not putting himself in an offensive position with his movements, then he or she is not to be given credit," said Reiss. "Ring generalship leads to clean punching and effective aggression. If you can't draw a line from what a fighter does to a successful offensive position, then it's not effective ring generalship."

In other words: Some of us may love the defensive wizards, but the judges' emphasis in how they reward rounds should be clear: Offense > defense.

Reiss' favorite fight to teach ring generalship is Round 4 of Floyd Mayweather vs. Robert Guerrero, where Mayweather was consistently putting himself in an offensive position, landing with a lot of shots while not being hit in return. This round was a masterful example of Mayweather using footwork and movement to create offense while nullifying the opponent. And it's instructive that Mayweather, one of the best defensive fighters of recent generations, is being used in this context to highlight his offensive success. It is the action of hitting, of landing, that's rewarded.

Reiss acknowledges that problems with the correct application of ring generalship remain throughout the sport. It's his belief that there are too many officials who don't have the proper training regarding the scoring criteria, and there's a lack of international standardization when it comes to which criteria are emphasized.

Al Bello

By getting his left foot outside Guerrero's right, Mayweather creates the path for a perfect straight right hand.

Simply put, Reiss believes that not enough officials know what they are looking at.

After speaking with Reiss, my takeaways for ring generalship and how to apply it were:

1. **Remember the hierarchy. Although ring generalship can be crucial in certain instances, its importance pales in comparison to clean, effective punching and effective aggression.**
2. **It's about offense. Boxing judges are trained to reward offensive success. Everything in the first three judging criteria is based on who was more successful offensively as it relates to landing scoring blows.**
3. **Evasive tactics in themselves are meaningless if they aren't followed by offensive action. Nullifying an opponent's offense is only rewarded if there is corresponding offensive success.**
4. **The lack of the uniformity in how ring generalship is applied by officials is a major problem in the sport.**

Concept in Practice: Mayweather-Guerrero, Round 4

Before delving into the specifics of Floyd Mayweather's mastery of ring generalship in this round, it's worth remembering a couple of points about this fight. Guerrero started off well in the first three rounds, and he had a case for winning at least two of the opening three frames. All four judges scored the fight for Mayweather, 117-111, or nine rounds to three. I was at this fight, and that's also how I scored it.

Watching the fight now, Guerrero is very good early, so when Mayweather dominates in Round 4, this is not the continuation of his supremacy from earlier in the fight, but it's the moment where he takes over; he has figured out what can work offensively and how to neutralize Guerrero.

The most striking thing about this round is that Mayweather dominates offensively with just two main punches: a lead right hand and a counter jab. It's great to watch tape to remind ourselves of his capabilities, because these two punches aren't necessarily the weapons for which Mayweather is most remembered. Usually, people will refer to his jab to the body, his counter left hook and his counter right hand as his best punches.

Mayweather starts the round moving, never letting a pocket develop. His early connects in the round are unusual: They are leaping right hands, where he leaves his feet and then moves to his right with quick shuffle steps to avoid Guerrero's counter left. This is an example of Mayweather's improvisatory genius; most likely he wasn't practicing leaving his feet during training camp to land this type of right hand. But by the fourth round, he has sized Guerrero up and realized that he could land this shot.

As the round continues, there are a couple of exchanges at midrange. Here, it's Mayweather's counter jab that consistently gets the better of the action. He's either jabbing over Guerrero's right jab or slipping a Guerrero straight left and countering with his jab. These sequences have the effect of reducing Guerrero's punch output. By the end of the round, Guerrero is barely jabbing at all.

Mayweather is gradually ticking every box on Reiss' list.

To my eyes, Guerrero lands only one impressive shot in the round, which was during a moment in the second half of the round where Mayweather voluntarily moves to the corner. Both fighters flurry, with not a ton landing, but Guerrero wraps a left hook around Mayweather's upper body that connects. Later in the round, when Mayweather is again in a corner, he evades all punches thrown at him and avoids any further damage, a terrific example of Mayweather's aptitude. Make a mistake once, fine. But don't make the same mistake again.

Mayweather exhibited dominance during the round from start to finish. He had a huge advantage in terms of connected punches and he was able to disarm Guerrero's potent offense from earlier in the fight. It's a fine example of the principles of ring generalship. He was evasive but then turned that into offense. Plus, he was the one hitting Guerrero consistently without getting hit in return. He gave Guerrero few opportunities and he was the one who controlled the ring action. The rest of the fight would demonstrate more of the same. RING

FOR MOMENTS
THAT STAY WITH YOU

VISITQATAR.COM

Inland Sea

visit
QATAR

Ring Ratings Through May 31, 2025

Jose Armando Resendiz got the upset win over Caleb Plant.

MEN'S Results

168: Jose Armando Resendiz (in at No. 4) **SD 12** Caleb Plant (No. 4, ▼-2)
168: Bektemir Melikuziev (in at No. 9) **UD 12** Darius Fulghum
160: Yoenli Hernandez (in at No. 6) **UD 10** Kyrone Davis (No. 7, out)
154: Erickson Lubin (in at No. 8) **TKO 11** Ardreal Holmes Jr.
154: Serhii Bohachuk (No. 6) **UD 10** Mykal Fox
147: Giovani Santillan (No. 4) **UD 10** Angel Beltran
147: Karen Chukhadzhian (No. 10) **UD 10** Cristian Ayala
147: Ekow Essuman (in at No. 10) **UD 12** Josh Taylor
135: Vasiliy Lomachenko (No. 2) removed for inactivity
135: Raymond Muratalla (No. 5) **UD 10** Zaur Abdullaev
130: Emanuel Navarrete (No. 1, ▼-1) **TD 8** Charly Suarez (in at No. 9) *(Note: Result later changed to NC)*
130: Anthony Cacace (No. 3) **TKO** 9 Leigh Wood
130: Eduardo Nunez (No. 6, ▲+1) **UD 12** Masanori Rikiishi
130: Joe Cordina (No. 5) removed for inactivity
126: Omar Trinidad (No. 10) **UD 10** Alexander Espinoza
126: Angelo Leo (No. 2) **MD 12** Tomoki Kameda
126: Nathaniel Collins (in at No. 10) **TKO 4** Lee McGregor
122: Sebastian Hernandez (No. 10) **UD 10** Azat Hovhannisyan
122: Sam Goodman (No. 4) **UD 10** Cesar Vaca Espinoza
122: Murodjon Akhmadaliev (No. 2) **TKO 8** Luis Castillo
118: Yoshiki Takei (No. 4) **TKO 1** Yuttapong Tongdee
115: Fernando Martinez (No. 1) **UD 12** Kazuto Ioka (No. 3)
115: Carlos Cuadras (No. 6) **UD 10** Luis Guzman
115: Willibaldo Garcia (in at No. 10) **SD 12** Rene Calixto Bibiano
112: Tobias Reyes (No. 10) **TKO 3** Jeanfran Medina
108: Adrian Curiel (No. 5) removed, fighting at higher weight
105: Pedro Taduran (No. 2) **SD 12** Ginjiro Shigeoka (No. 4) *(Note: Shigeoka tragically suffered a subdural hematoma during the fight and was forced to retire.)*
105: Knockout CP Freshmart (No. 3) **UD 10** Roland Toyogon
105: Siyakholwa Kuse (No. 7, ▲+1) **UD 10** Samuel Salva

WOMEN'S Results

135: Terri Harper (No. 3, ▲+1) **UD 10** Natalie Zimmermann
126: Nina Meinke (No. 3, ▲+1) **UD 12** Daniela Bermudez (No. 5)
122: Mayelli Flores Rosquero (in at No. 3) **SD 10** Nazarena Romero (No. 3, ▼-1)
122: Erika Cruz Hernandez (in at No. 4) **TKO 6** Maricruz Rodriguez
115: Mizuki Hiruta (No. 1, new champion) **UD 10** Carla Merino (No. 2, ▼-2)
112: Alexas Kubiki (in at No. 5) **UD 10** Alondra Hernandez
112: Gabriela Alaniz (No. 1) removed, moved down in weight

MEN'S RING RATINGS Through May 31, 2025

CHAMPIONSHIP BELTS: ◆ RING ◆ IBF ◆ WBA ◆ WBC ◆ WBO | ★ NEW TO RATINGS

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C **OLEKSANDR USYK** ◆◆◆◆
Ukraine • 23-0-0 (14 KOs)

1 **TYSON FURY**
U.K. • 34-2-1 (24 KOs)

2 **DANIEL DUBOIS** ◆
U.K. • 22-2-0 (21 KOs)

3 **JOSEPH PARKER**
New Zealand • 36-3-0 (24 KOs)

4 **AGIT KABAYEL**
Germany • 26-0-0 (18 KOs)

5 **ANTHONY JOSHUA**
U.K. • 28-4-0 (25 KOs)

6 **FILIP HRGOVIC**
Croatia • 18-1-0 (14 KOs)

7 **ZHILEI ZHANG**
China • 27-3-1 (22 KOs)

8 **MARTIN BAKOLE**
Congo • 21-2-1 (16 KOs)

9 ▲+1 **EFE AJAGBA**
Nigeria • 20-1-1 (14 KOs)

10 ▼-1 **FABIO WARDLEY**
U.K. • 18-0-1 (17 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 POUNDS

C **JAI OPETAIA** ◆◆
Australia • 27-0-0 (21 KOs)

1 **GILBERTO RAMIREZ** ◆◆
Mexico • 47-1-0 (30 KOs)

2 **CHRIS BILLAM-SMITH**
U.K. • 21-2-0 (13 KOs)

3 **ALEKSEI PAPIN**
Russia • 18-1-0 (17 KOs)

4 ▲+1 **MICHAL CIESLAK**
Poland • 27-2-0 (21 KOs)

5 ▲+1 **RYAN ROZICKI**
Canada • 20-1-1 (19 KOs)

6 ★ **BADOU JACK** ◆
Sweden • 29-3-3 (17 KOs)

7 ★ **NOEL MIKAELIAN**
Armenia • 27-3-0 (12 KOs)

8 ▼-1 **YAMIL PERALTA**
Argentina • 17-1-1 (9 KOs)

9 ▼-1 **LEONARDO MOSQUEA**
France • 16-0-0 (9 KOs)

10 ▼-1 **ROBIN SIRWAN SAFAR**
Sweden • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 POUNDS

C **DMITRY BIVOL** ◆◆◆◆
Russia • 24-1-0 (12 KOs)

1 **ARTUR BETERBIEV**
Russia • 21-1-0 (20 KOs)

2 **DAVID BENAVIDEZ** ◆
U.S. • 30-0-0 (24 KOs)

3 **CALLUM SMITH**
U.K. • 31-2-0 (22 KOs)

4 **ANTHONY YARDE**
U.K. • 27-3-0 (24 KOs)

5 **JOSHUA BUATSI**
U.K. • 19-1-0 (13 KOs)

6 **ALBERT RAMIREZ**
Venezuela • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)

7 **OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK**
Ukraine • 21-2-0 (17 KOs)

8 **DAVID MORRELL**
Cuba • 11-1-0 (9 KOs)

9 **WILLY HUTCHINSON**
U.K. • 18-2-0 (13 KOs)

10 **IMAM KHATAEV**
Australia • 10-0-0 (9 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

C **CANELO ALVAREZ** ◆◆◆◆◆
Mexico • 63-2-2 (39 KOs)

1 **CHRISTIAN MBILLI**
France • 28-0-0 (23 KOs)

2 **DIEGO PACHECO**
U.S. • 23-0-0 (18 KOs)

3 **OSLEYS IGLESIAS**
Cuba • 13-0-0 (12 KOs)

4 ★ **JOSE ARMANDO RESENDIZ**
Mexico • 16-2-0 (11 KOs)

5 ▲+3 **JAIME MUNGUIA**
Mexico • 45-2-0 (35 KOs)

6 ▼-2 **CALEB PLANT**
U.S. • 23-3-0 (14 KOs)

7 ▼-1 **WILLIAM SCULL**
Cuba • 23-1-0 (9 KOs)

8 ▼-1 **VLADIMIR SHISHKIN**
Russia • 16-1-0 (10 KOs)

9 ★ **BEKTEMIR MELIKUZIEV**
Uzbekistan • 16-1-0 (10 KOs)

10 ▼-2 **BRUNO SURACE**
France • 26-1-2 (5 KOs)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**

1 **ZHANIBEK ALIMKHANULY** ◆◆
Kazakhstan • 17-0-0 (12 KOs)

2 **CARLOS ADAMES** ◆
Dom. Rep. • 24-1-1 (18 KOs)

3 **HAMZAH SHEERAZ**
U.K. • 21-0-1 (17 KOs)

4 **ERISLANDY LARA** ◆
Cuba • 31-3-3 (19 KOs)

5 **CHRIS EUBANK JR.**
U.K. • 35-3-0 (25 KOs)

6 ★ **YOENLI HERNANDEZ**
Cuba • 8-0-0 (7 KOs)

7 ▼-1 **ETINOSA OLIHA**
Italy • 21-0-0 (9 KOs)

8 **TROY ISLEY**
U.S. • 14-0-0 (5 KOs)

9 **SHANE MOSLEY JR.**
U.S. • 22-4-0 (12 KOs)

10 **AARON MCKENNA**
Ireland • 20-0-0 (10 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**

1 **TERENCE CRAWFORD** ◆
U.S. • 41-0-0 (31 KOs)

2 **VERGIL ORTIZ**
U.S. • 23-0-0 (21 KOs)

3 **ISRAIL MADRIMOV**
Uzbekistan • 10-2-1 (7 KOs)

4 **BAKHRAM MURTAZALIEV** ◆
Russia • 23-0-0 (17 KOs)

5 **SEBASTIAN FUNDORA** ◆
U.S. • 22-1-1 (14 KOs)

6 **SERHII BOHACHUK**
Ukraine • 26-2-0 (24 KOs)

7 **TIM TSZYU**
Australia • 25-2-0 (18 KOs)

8 ★ **ERICKSON LUBIN**
U.S. • 27-2-0 (19 KOs)

9 ▼-1 **JESUS RAMOS**
U.S. • 23-1-0 (19 KOs)

10 ▼-1 **JORGE GARCIA PEREZ**
Mexico • 33-4-0 (26 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

C **JARON ENNIS** ◆◆◆
U.S. • 34-0-0 (30 KOs)

1 **BRIAN NORMAN JR.** ◆
U.S. • 27-0-0 (21 KOs)

2 **EIMANTAS STANIONIS**
Lithuania • 15-1-0 (9 KOs)

3 **MARIO BARRIOS** ◆
U.S. • 29-2-1 (18 KOs)

4 **GIOVANI SANTILLAN**
U.S. • 34-1-0 (18 KOs)

5 **SHAKHRAM GIYASOV**
Uzbekistan • 17-0-0 (10 KOs)

6 **JIN SASAKI**
Japan • 19-1-1 (17 KOs)

7 ▲+2 **ROHAN POLANCO**
Dom. Rep. • 16-0-0 (10 KOs)

8 ▼-1 **ALEXIS ROCHA**
U.S. • 25-2-1 (16 KOs)

9 ▼-1 **RAUL CURIEL**
Mexico • 15-0-1 (13 KOs)

10 ★ **EKOW ESSUMAN**
U.K. • 22-1-0 (8 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

C **TEOFIMO LOPEZ** ◆◆
U.S. • 22-1-0 (13 KOs)

1 **RICHARDSON HITCHINS** ◆
U.S. • 19-0-0 (7 KOs)

2 ▲+2 **ALBERTO PUELLO** ◆
Dom. Rep. • 24-0-0 (10 KOs)

3 ▲+2 **JACK CATTERALL**
U.K. • 30-2-0 (13 KOs)

4 ▼-1 **ARNOLD BARBOZA**
U.S. • 32-1-0 (11 KOs)

5 ▲+1 **LIAM PARO**
Australia • 25-1-0 (15 KOs)

6 ▲+1 **SUBRIEL MATIAS**
Puerto Rico • 22-2-0 (22 KOs)

7 ▲+1 **GARY ANTUANNE RUSSELL** ◆
U.S. • 18-1-0 (17 KOs)

8 ▲+1 **SANDOR MARTIN**
Spain • 42-4-0 (15 KOs)

9 ▲+1 **DALTON SMITH**
U.K. • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)

10 ★ **ANDY HIRAOKA**
Japan • 24-0-0 (19 KOs)

MEN'S RING RATINGS Through May 31, 2025

CHAMPIONSHIP BELTS: ◆ RING ◆ IBF ◆ WBA ◆ WBC ◆ WBO | ★ NEW TO RATINGS

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

C	(VACANT)	
1	GERVONTA DAVIS ◆	U.S. • 30-0-1 (28 KOs)
2	▲+1 KEYSHAWN DAVIS ◆	U.S. • 13-0-0 (9 KOs)
3	▲+1 SHAKUR STEVENSON ◆	U.S. • 23-0-0 (11 KOs)
4	▲+1 WILLIAM ZEPEDA	Mexico • 33-0-0 (27 KOs)
5	▲+1 RAYMOND MURATALLA	U.S. • 23-0-0 (17 KOs)
6	▲+1 ANDY CRUZ	Cuba • 5-0-0 (2 KOs)
7	▲+1 FRANK MARTIN	U.S. • 18-1-0 (12 KOs)
8	▲+1 DENYS BERINCHYK	Ukraine • 19-1-0 (9 KOs)
9	▲+1 TEVIN FARMER	U.S. • 33-8-1 (8 KOs)
10	★ SAM NOAKES	U.K. • 17-0-0 (15 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

C	(VACANT)	
1	▲+1 O'SHAQUIE FOSTER ◆	U.S. • 23-3-0 (12 KOs)
2	▼-1 EMANUEL NAVARRETE ◆	Mexico • 39-2-1 (32 KOs)
3	ANTHONY CACACE	Ireland • 24-1-0 (9 KOs)
4	LAMONT ROACH ◆	U.S. • 25-1-2 (10 KOs)
5	▲+2 EDUARDO NUNEZ ◆	Mexico • 28-1-0 (27 KOs)
6	ROBSON CONCEICAO	Brazil • 19-3-1 (9 KOs)
7	▲+1 EDUARDO HERNANDEZ	Mexico • 37-2-0 (32 KOs)
8	★ CHARLY SUAREZ	Philippines • 18-1-0 (10 KOs)
9	ALBERT BATYRGAZIEV	Russia • 12-0-0 (8 KOs)
10	RAYMOND FORD	U.S. • 17-1-1 (8 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

C	(VACANT)	
1	▲+1 RAFAEL ESPINOZA ◆	Mexico • 27-0-0 (23 KOs)
2	▼-1 ANGELO LEO ◆	U.S. • 26-1-0 (12 KOs)
3	NICK BALL ◆	U.K. • 22-0-1 (12 KOs)
4	STEPHEN FULTON ◆	U.S. • 23-1-0 (8 KOs)
5	LUIS ALBERTO LOPEZ	Mexico • 31-3-0 (18 KOs)
6	BRANDON FIGUEROA	U.S. • 25-2-1 (19 KOs)
7	BRUCE CARRINGTON	U.S. • 15-0-0 (9 KOs)
8	MIRCO CUELLO	Argentina • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
9	ROBEISY RAMIREZ	Cuba • 14-3-0 (9 KOs)
10	★ NATHANIEL COLLINS	U.K. • 17-0-0 (8 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

C	NAOYA INOUE ◆◆◆◆◆	Japan • 30-0-0 (27 KOs)
1	MARLON TAPALES	Philippines • 40-4-0 (21 KOs)
2	MURODJON AKHMADALIEV	Uzbekistan • 14-1-0 (11 KOs)
3	LUIS NERY	Mexico • 36-2-0 (28 KOs)
4	SAM GOODMAN	Australia • 20-0-0 (8 KOs)
5	ALAN PICASSO	Mexico • 31-0-1 (17 KOs)
6	SHABAZ MASOUD	U.K. • 14-0-0 (4 KOs)
7	TJ DOHENY	Ireland • 26-6-0 (20 KOs)
8	ELIJAH PIERCE	U.S. • 20-2-0 (16 KOs)
9	RAMON CARDENAS	U.S. • 26-2-0 (14 KOs)
10	SEBASTIAN HERNANDEZ	Mexico • 20-0-0 (18 KOs)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

C	(VACANT)	
1	JUNTO NAKATANI ◆	Japan • 30-0-0 (23 KOs)
2	RYOSUKE NISHIDA ◆	Japan • 10-0-0 (2 KOs)
3	SEIYA TSUTSUMI	Japan • 12-0-3 (8 KOs)
4	YOSHIKI TAKEI ◆	Japan • 11-0-0 (9 KOs)
5	TAKUMA INOUE	Japan • 20-2-0 (5 KOs)
6	▲+1 DAIGO HIGA	Japan • 21-3-2 (19 KOs)
7	▲+1 TENSHIN NASUKAWA	Japan • 6-0-0 (2 KOs)
8	▲+1 JASON MOLONEY	Australia • 27-4-0 (19 KOs)
9	▲+1 JEYVIER CINTRON	Puerto Rico • 13-1-0 (6 KOs)
10	★ KENNETH LLOVER	Philippines • 14-0-0 (9 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

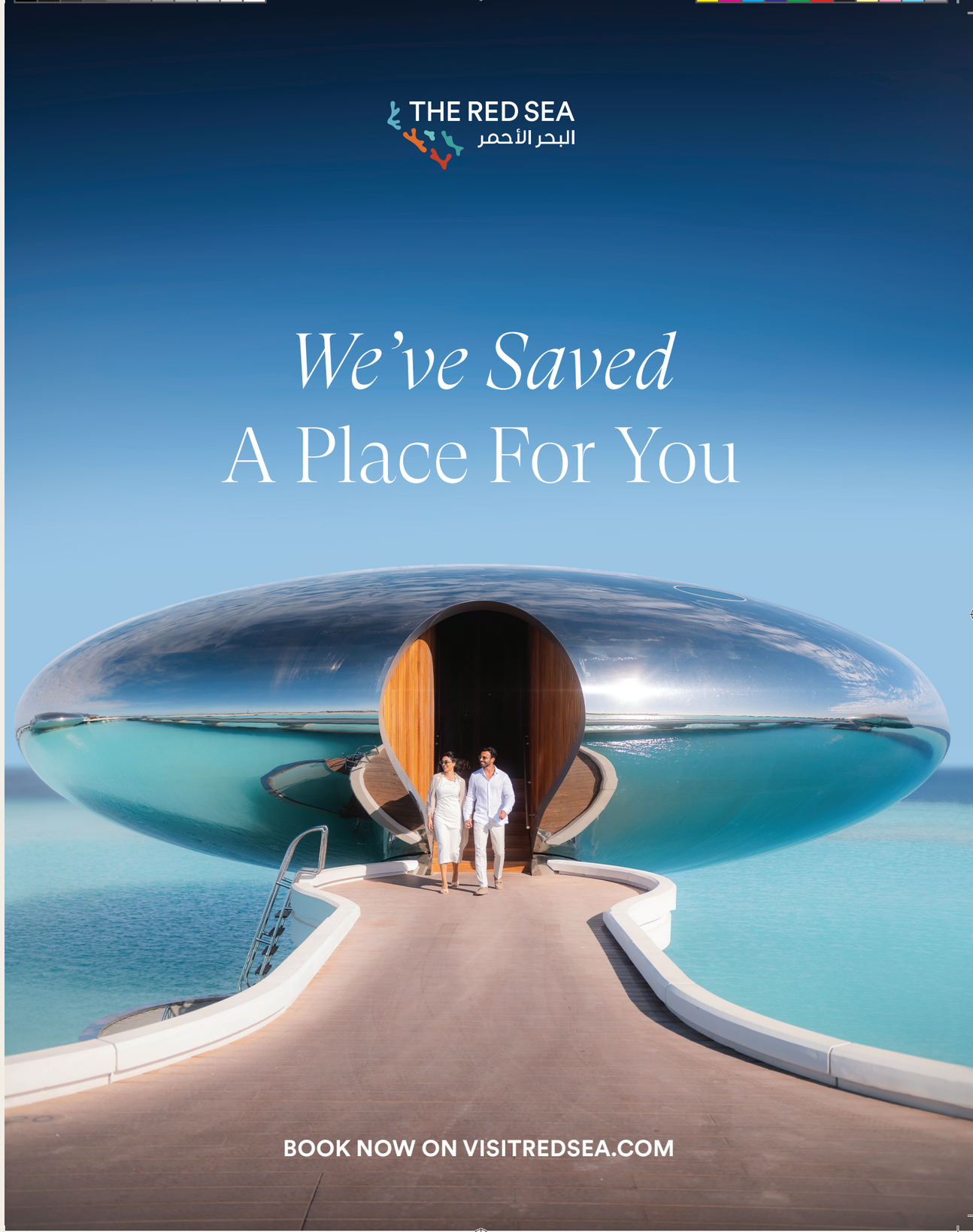
C	JESSE RODRIGUEZ ◆◆	U.S. • 21-0-0 (14 KOs)
1	FERNANDO MARTINEZ ◆	Argentina • 18-0-0 (9 KOs)
2	JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA	Mexico • 44-4-0 (28 KOs)
3	KAZUTO IOKA	Japan • 31-4-1 (16 KOs)
4	PHUMELELE CAFU ◆	S. Africa • 11-0-3 (8 KOs)
5	KOSEI TANAKA	Japan • 20-2-0 (11 KOs)
6	CARLOS CUADRAS	Mexico • 44-5-1 (28 KOs)
7	ANDREW MOLONEY	Australia • 27-4-0 (17 KOs)
8	DAVID JIMENEZ	Costa Rica • 17-1-0 (11 KOs)
9	PEDRO GUEVARA	Mexico • 43-5-1 (22 KOs)
10	★ WILLIBALDO GARCIA	Mexico • 23-5-2 (13 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

C	(VACANT)	
1	KENSHIRO TERAJI ◆◆	Japan • 25-1-0 (16 KOs)
2	SEIGO YURI AKUI	Japan • 21-3-1 (11 KOs)
3	MASAMICHI YABUKI ◆	Japan • 18-4-0 (17 KOs)
4	GALAL YAFAI	U.K. • 9-0-0 (7 KOs)
5	RICARDO SANDOVAL	U.S. • 26-2-0 (18 KOs)
6	ANGEL AYALA	Mexico • 18-1-0 (8 KOs)
7	FELIX ALVARADO	Nicaragua • 42-4-0 (35 KOs)
8	ANTHONY OLASCUAGA ◆	U.S. • 9-1-0 (6 KOs)
9	FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.	Mexico • 39-6-1 (27 KOs)
10	TOBIAS REYES	Argentina • 17-1-1 (16 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

C	(VACANT)	
1	RENE SANTIAGO ◆	Puerto Rico • 14-4-0 (9 KOs)
2	SIVENATHI NONTSHINGA	S. Africa • 13-2-0 (10 KOs)
3	SHOKICHI IWATA	Japan • 14-2-0 (11 KOs)
4	CARLOS CANIZALES	Venezuela • 27-3-1 (19 KOs)
5	▲+1 THANONGSAK SIMSRI	Thailand • 38-1-0 (34 KOs)
6	▲+1 CRISTIAN ARANETA	Philippines • 25-2-0 (20 KOs)
7	▲+1 REGIE SUGANOB	Philippines • 16-1-0 (6 KOs)
8	▲+1 ERICK ROSA ◆	Dom. Rep. • 8-0-0 (2 KOs)
9	▲+1 PANYA PRADABSRI ◆	Thailand • 44-2-0 (27 KOs)
10	★ KYOSUKE TAKAMI	Japan • 9-0-0 (7 KOs)



MEN'S RING RATINGS Through May 31, 2025

CHAMPIONSHIP BELTS: ◆ RING ◆ IBF ◆ WBA ◆ WBC ◆ WBO | ★ NEW TO RATINGS

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

C **OSCAR COLLAZO** ◆◆◆
U.S. • 12-0-0 (9 KOs)

1 **MELVIN JERUSALEM** ◆
Philippines • 24-3-0 (12 KOs)

2 **PEDRO TADURAN** ◆
Philippines • 18-4-1 (13 KOs)

3 **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART**
Thailand • 27-1-0 (10 KOs)

4 ▲+1 **YUDAI SHIGEOKA**
Japan • 9-2-0 (5 KOs)

5 ▲+2 **SIYAKHOLWA KUSE**
S. Africa • 9-2-1 (4 KOs)

6 **DIANXING ZHU**
China • 14-1-0 (12 KOs)

7 ▲+1 **YUNI TAKADA**
Japan • 16-8-3 (6 KOs)

8 ▲+1 **JOEY CANOY**
Philippines • 24-5-2 (15 KOs)

9 ▲+1 **RYUSEI MATSUMOTO**
Japan • 5-0-0 (3 KOs)

10 ★ **VIC SALUDAR**
Philippines • 26-6-0 (16 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED
RECORDS PROVIDED BY BOXREC.COM

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. The Ring's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the Ring title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose their belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which they are champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at their championship weight for 18 months (even if they fight at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

The Ring Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

POUND FOR POUND LIST

MEN

1 **OLEKSANDR USYK**
Ukraine • 23-0-0 (14 KOs)

2 **NAOYA INOUE**
Japan • 30-0-0 (27 KOs)

3 **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
U.S. • 41-0-0 (31 KOs)

4 **DMITRY BIVOL**
Russia • 24-1-0 (12 KOs)

5 **ARTUR BETERBIEV**
Russia • 21-1-0 (20 KOs)

6 **JESSE RODRIGUEZ**
U.S. • 21-0-0 (14 KOs)

7 **JUNTO NAKATANI**
Japan • 30-0-0 (23 KOs)

8 **CANELO ALVAREZ**
Mexico • 63-2-2 (39 KOs)

9 **KENSHIRO TERAJI**
Japan • 25-1-0 (16 KOs)

10 **DAVID BENAVIDEZ**
U.S. • 30-0-0 (24 KOs)

Cover star Naoya Inoue has been a mainstay on the pound-for-pound list since 2017.

WOMEN

1 **CLARESSA SHIELDS**
U.S. • 16-0-0 (3 KOs)

2 **KATIE TAYLOR**
Ireland • 24-1-0 (6 KOs)

3 **CHANTELLE CAMERON**
U.K. • 20-1-0 (8 KOs)

4 **AMANDA SERRANO**
Puerto Rico • 47-3-1 (31 KOs)

5 **DINA THORSLUND**
Denmark • 23-0-0 (9 KOs)

6 **GABRIELA FUNDORA**
U.S. • 16-0-0 (8 KOs)

7 **LAUREN PRICE**
U.K. • 9-0-0 (2 KOs)

8 **YOKASTA VALLE**
Costa Rica • 33-3-0 (10 KOs)

9 **MIKAELA MAYER**
U.S. • 21-2-0 (5 KOs)

10 **TINA RUPPRECHT**
Germany • 15-1-1 (3 KOs)

Naoki Fukuda

WOMEN'S RING RATINGS Through May 31, 2025

CHAMPIONSHIP BELTS: ◆RING ◆IBF ◆WBA ◆WBC ◆WBO | ★ NEW TO RATINGS

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

C SAVANNAH MARSHALL ◆◆
U.K. • 13-1-0 (10 KOs)
1 FRANCHON CREWS-DEZURN ◆◆
U.S. • 9-2-0 (2 KOs)
2 SHADASIA GREEN
U.S. • 15-1-0 (11 KOs)
3 LANI DANIELS
New Zealand • 11-2-2 (1 KO)
4 MARY CASAMASSA
U.S. • 6-0-0 (1 KO)
5 CITLALLI ORTIZ
Mexico • 4-1-0 (1 KO)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

C CLARESSA SHIELDS ◆◆◆
U.S. • 16-0-0 (3 KOs)
1 DESLEY ROBINSON ◆
Australia • 10-3-0 (3 KOs)
2 MELINDA WATPOOL
Canada • 7-1-0 (2 KOs)
3 MAPULE NGUBANE
S. Africa • 14-9-3 (3 KOs)
4 ADRIANA DOS SANTOS ARAUJO
Brazil • 6-3-0 (1 KO)
5 KAYE SCOTT
Australia • 4-1-0 (0 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

C. (VACANT)
1 OSHAE JONES ◆
U.S. • 8-0-0 (3 KOs)
2 CECILIA BRAEKHUS
Norway • 38-2-1 (9 KOs)
3 FEMKE HERMANS
Belgium • 18-5-0 (7 KOs)
4 MARY SPENCER ◆
Canada • 10-2-0 (6 KOs)
5 PRISCILLA PETERLE
France • 11-0-0 (3 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

C LAUREN PRICE ◆◆◆◆
U.K. • 9-0-0 (2 KO)
1 MIKAELA MAYER ◆
U.S. • 21-2-0 (5 KOs)
2 NATASHA JONAS
U.K. • 16-3-1 (9 KOs)
3 SANDY RYAN
U.K. • 7-3-1 (3 KOs)
4 MICHAELA KOTASKOVA
Czech Rep. • 10-0-2 (4 KOs)
5 STEPHANIE AQUINO
Puerto Rico • 8-0-0 (2 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

C KATIE TAYLOR ◆◆◆◆◆
Ireland • 24-1-0 (6 KOs)
1 CHANTELLE CAMERON
U.K. • 20-1-0 (8 KOs)
2 SAMANTHA WORTHINGTON
U.S. • 11-0-0 (7 KOs)
3 FLORA PILI
France • 11-0-0 (2 KOs)
4 ELIZABETH OSHOBA
Nigeria • 9-0-0 (5 KOs)
5 ELHEM MEKHALED
France • 17-3-0 (3 KOs)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

C. (VACANT)
1 CAROLINE DUBOIS ◆
U.K. • 11-0-1 (5 KOs)
2 ▲+1 **TERRI HARPER** ◆
U.K. • 16-2-2 (6 KOs)
3 ▼-1 **BEATRIZ FERREIRA** ◆
Brazil • 6-0-0 (2 KOs)
4 RHIANNON DIXON
U.K. • 10-1-0 (1 KO)
5 BO MI RE SHIN
South Korea • 18-3-3 (10 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

C ALYCIA BAUMGARDNER ◆◆◆◆◆
U.S. • 15-1-0 (7 KOs)
1 DELFINE PERSOON
Belgium • 49-3-0 (19 KOs)
2 LEILA BEAUDOIN
Canada • 12-1-0 (1 KO)
3 JENNIFER MIRANDA
Spain • 12-0-0 (1 KO)
4 MEA MOTU
New Zealand • 21-1-0 (9 KOs)
5 RIMA AYADI
France • 11-0-0 (1 KO)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

C AMANDA SERRANO ◆◆◆
Puerto Rico • 47-3-1 (31 KOs)
1 TIARA BROWN ◆
U.S. • 19-0-0 (11 KOS)
2 ▲+1 **NINA MEINKE** ◆
German • 20-3-0 (4 KOs)
3 ▼-1 **SKYE NICOLSON**
Australia • 12-1-0 (1 KO)
4 SARAH MAHFOUD
Denmark • 15-2-0 (3 KOs)
5 DANIELA BERMUDEZ
Argentina • 32-5-3 (12 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

C ELLIE SCOTNEY ◆◆◆
U.K. • 10-0-0 (0 KOs)
1 YAMILETH MERCADO ◆
Mexico • 24-3-0 (5 KOs)
2 SEGOLENE LEFEBVRE
France • 19-1-0 (1 KO)
3 ★ **MAYELLI FLORES ROSQUERO** ◆
Mexico • 13-1-1 (4 KOs)
4 ★ **ERIKA CRUZ-HERNANDEZ**
Mexico • 18-2-1 (4 KOs)
5 ▼-2 **NAZARENA ROMERO**
Argentina • 14-1-2 (8 KOs)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

C DINA THORSLUND ◆◆◆
Denmark • 23-0-0 (9 KOs)
1 CHERNEKA JOHNSON ◆
Australia • 17-2-0 (7 KOs)
2 YULIAHN LUNA AVILA
Mexico • 28-4-1 (4 KOs)
3 SHURRETTA METCALF ◆
U.S. • 14-4-1 (2 KOs)
4 DIANA LAURA FERNANDEZ
Mexico • 34-4-1 (5 KOs)
5 NINA HUGHES
U.K. • 7-2-0 (2 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

C ▲+1 **MIZUKI HIRUTA** ◆◆
Japan • 8-0-0 (2 KOs)
1 ▲+2 **GINNY FUCHS**
U.S. • 4-0-0 (1 KO)
2 ▲+2 **ADELAIDA RUIZ**
U.S. • 16-1-1 (8 KOs)
3 ▲+2 **ASLEY GONZALEZ** ◆
Mexico • 17-2-0 (7 KOs)
4 ▼-2 **CARLA MERINO**
Argentina • 16-3-0 (3 KOs)
5 ★ **EMMA DOLAN**
U.K. • 8-0 (1 KO)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

C GABRIELA FUNDORA ◆◆◆◆◆
U.S. • 16-0-0 (8 KOs)
1 ▲+1 **KENIA ENRIQUEZ**
Mexico • 28-1-0 (11 KOs)
2 ▲+1 **ARELY MUCINO**
Mexico • 32-5-2 (11 KOs)
3 ▲+1 **JASMINA ZAPOTOCZNA**
U.K. • 9-1-0 (0 KOs)
4 ▲+1 **MARILYN BADILLO AMAYA**
Mexico • 19-1-1 (3 KOs)
5 ★ **AL EXAS KUBIKI**
Canada • 13-1 (2 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

C (VACANT)
1 EVELIN BERMUDEZ ◆◆
Argentina • 21-1-1 (7 KOs)
2 KIM CLAVEL
Canada • 21-2-0 (3 KOs)
3 LOURDES JUAREZ ◆
Mexico • 38-4-0 (5 KOs)
4 SARA BAILEY ◆
Canada • 6-0 (0 KOs)
5 GABRIELA ALANIZ
Argentina • 16-2-0 (6 KOS)

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

C (VACANT)
1 YOKASTA VALLE ◆
Costa Rica • 33-3-0 (10 KOs)
2 SARAH BORMANN ◆
Germany • 20-1-0 (7 KOs)
3 YUKO KUROKI ◆
Japan • 24-8-2 (10 KOs)
4 SOL CUDOS ◆
Argentina • 10-0-2 (3 KOs)
5 SOL BAUMSTARH
Argentina • 13-7-1 (8 KOs)

ATOMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 102 POUNDS

C TINA RUPPRECHT ◆◆◆◆◆
Germany • 15-1-1 (3 KOs)
1 SUMIRE YAMANAKA
Japan • 8-1-0 (3 KOs)
2 ERI MATSUDA
Japan • 7-2-1 (1 KO)
3 ESNEIDY RODRIGUEZ OLMOS
Mexico • 9-0-1 (0 KOs)
4 NAO UGAWA
Japan • 6-0-0 (0 KOs)
5 CAMILA ZAMORANO
Mexico • 11-0-0 (1 KO)

DOUBLE JEOPARDY

NAOYA INOUE HAS ALREADY ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS ONE OF THE GREATEST FIGHTERS OF THIS GENERATION, BUT THE MONSTER'S MOST ARDUOUS AND THRILLING CHALLENGES COULD STILL BE AHEAD OF HIM

By Tom Gray

When Naoya Inoue moved into the bantamweight and junior featherweight divisions, he played cobra to the reigning titleholders, most of whom were viewed as ill-fated rodents in a glass tank. Through 11 fights, Inoue repeatedly sank his fangs into his prey and emerged as undisputed champion in both weight classes.

However, in two of his last three appearances, "The Monster" has been knocked off his feet by Mexican ex-titleholder Luis Nery and, more recently, Texas-based contender Ramon Cardenas. In both cases, Inoue got off the floor to retain his championship by destructive stoppage, but are these sudden moments of vulnerability a sign that his cloak of invincibility is wearing thin?

"Almost all great fighters have been dropped," countered former Ring Magazine Trainer of the Year Joe Gallagher. "Elite fighters have an aura where you can hurt them and they say, 'OK, I've been dropped, but I'm getting up and I'll still beat you.' Inoue has that old-school mentality."

Undeterred, the four-weight world champ is ready to embark on what could be the most challenging period of his career to date. If Inoue comes through a potentially tricky assignment against former unified junior featherweight titleholder Murodjon Akhmadaliev on September 14 in Tokyo, then all signs point toward a money-spinning superfight, as well as another jump up in weight.

A new force out of Japan, Junto Nakatani, has sent shockwaves through the sport while collecting world titles in three divisions. Like Inoue, he's unbeaten, fast, pound-for-

Steve Marcus

pound-rated and an authentic knockout artist. A fight between the pair would be the biggest in Japanese boxing history and one of the best matchups in the sport today. Luckily, both men seem willing to make it happen.

Inoue, 32, also aspires to become a five-weight world champion, which would mean another trip up the scales to featherweight. Awaiting him there is a pair of unbeaten titleholders, Rafael Espinoza and Nick Ball, both with formidable arsenals.

It's the fans who stand to be the beneficiaries if any of these potentially explosive showdowns are made over the next 12-18 months. The Ring spoke with a selection of boxing luminaries to discuss these matchups further.

THE SUPERFIGHT

Inoue (30-0, 27 KOs) has been a world champion for over a decade, impressively defeating a series of respected titleholders and top contenders. He earned his pound-for-pound position (currently No. 2 behind heavyweight king Oleksandr Usyk) the hard way and is already a first-ballot Hall of Famer.

However, some fans are impossible to satisfy. Inoue is so good that there are desperate souls out there calling for him to leapfrog several divisions and fight Gervonta Davis. Davis, the reigning WBA lightweight titleholder, has campaigned as high as 140 pounds and is bursting at the seams at 135. Sorry, folks, that's just stupid.

Not to worry. There's a realistic and authentic superfight out there for Inoue, and it's right on his doorstep.

JUNTO NAKATANI

RECORD: 30-0 (23 KOS)
STATUS: WBC BANTAMWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER/ THE RING NO. 1 AT 118 POUNDS

Junto Nakatani scored his first notable victory in October 2019 when he outclassed and stopped former IBF junior flyweight titleholder Milan Melindo in six rounds.

Since then, the classy Japanese lefty has won nine world title fights across three divisions and scored eight stoppages. He also outpointed the highly respected Francisco Rodriguez Jr. in a non-title attraction. Among his other victims are Giemel Magramo (TKO 8), Angel Acosta (TKO 4), Andrew Moloney (KO 12) and Alexandro Santiago (TKO 6).

"The thing that makes him so difficult is his style," said Moloney, who was on the receiving end of The Ring's Knockout of the Year for 2023. "He's extremely long and tall for the weight, then you mix in the fact that he's a southpaw. He makes it very difficult for us shorter guys to close the distance and land anything significant on him.

"You also need to factor in that he has very good accuracy. For the majority of that fight, I didn't feel that his power was ridiculous, which may sound like a silly thing to say when he knocked me out cold. But it was the accuracy and timing of those shots that were very good.

"He's the best I've faced and a very frustrating guy to fight."

In terms of corner strength, acclaimed Los Angeles-based coach Rudy Hernandez has guided Nakatani, 27, since he was a teenager and the results speak for themselves.

"Inoue hasn't faced nobody like Junto, and we've never faced anyone like him," said Nakatani's coach with respect. "Both are very talented fighters, hard-working fighters.

"I believe, personally, that Inoue is the number one pound-for-pound fighter in the world. If the day ever comes when we fight, Inoue will be the favorite… he's earned that. It's just that the best can't stay the best forever. We want to be able to beat Inoue when he's the number one guy in the world. We want to be in his position."

But does Nakatani have what it takes to vanquish the current king of Japanese boxing?

"I get asked about this a lot because I've faced Nakatani and because I was very close to the action when my brother [Jason] fought Inoue," said Moloney.

"Nakatani's style is unique, so it'll be interesting to see how Inoue deals with that. But, overall, I still favor Inoue in the fight. I think that his explosiveness, his speed with his feet and his hands, and the way he's able to close the distance so quickly [gives him the advantage]. It's a great fight and I hope it happens."

At the time of writing, Nakatani was scheduled to face countryman and IBF counterpart Ryosuke Nishida in a bantamweight unification clash on June 8 in Tokyo. The vacant Ring Magazine championship will also be at stake. Should Nakatani prevail, then The Monster will be back in his sights.

FEATHERWEIGHT

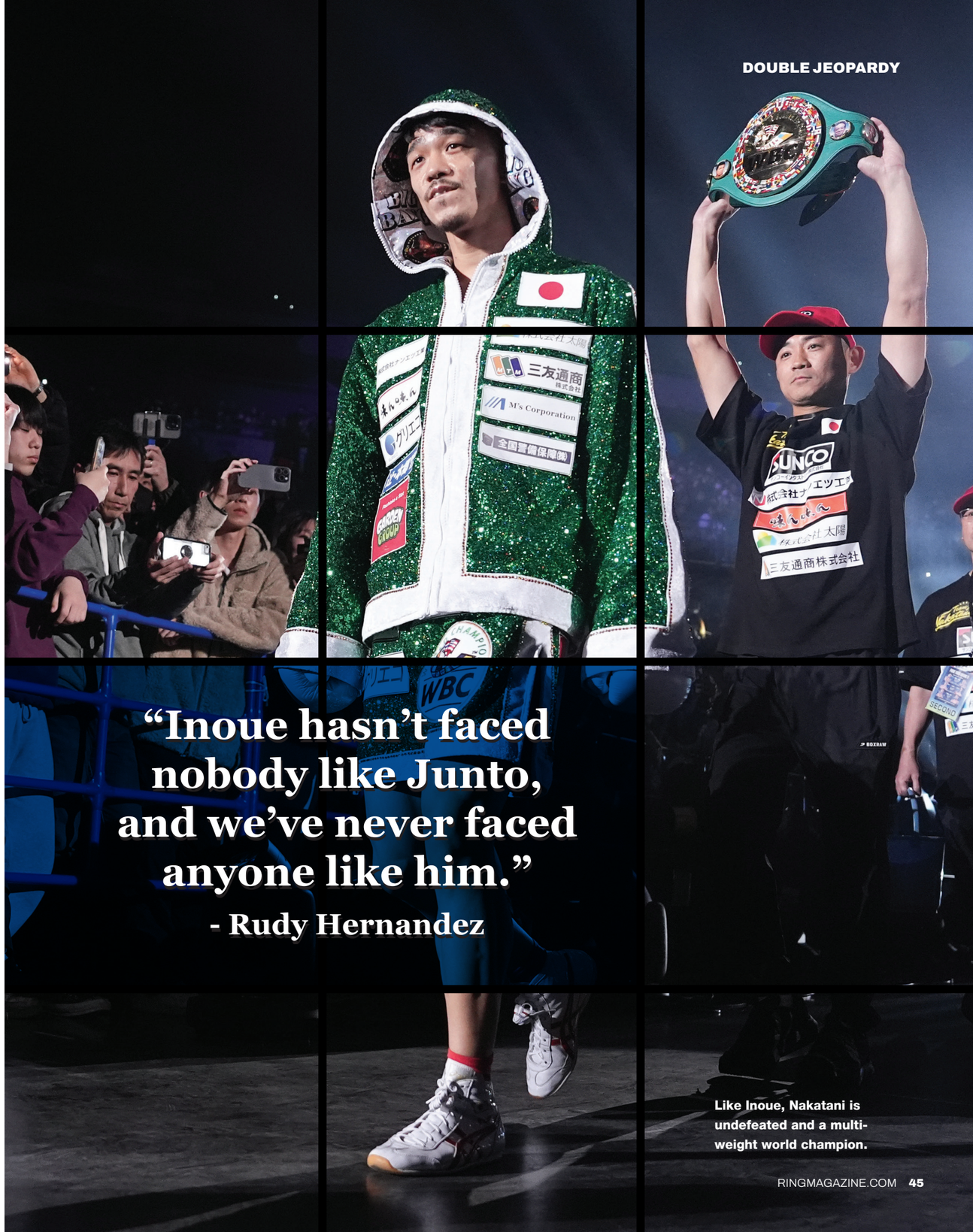
Fighters have been rolling the dice with the scales for over a century. In the 1920s, Mickey Walker, "The Toy Bulldog," captured world titles at welterweight and middleweight by implementing a notoriously savage and relentless attack. But what's more amazing is that the 5-foot-7 Walker was tackling light heavyweights and heavyweights before his all-time great career was over. After Walker had hung up the gloves, Henry Armstrong, known as "Homicide Hank," reigned as featherweight, lightweight and welterweight champion simultaneously during the 1930s, an accomplishment that will never be matched.

Can the great Inoue decimate yet another division and leave a string of knockout victims in his wake, or is featherweight a bridge too far?

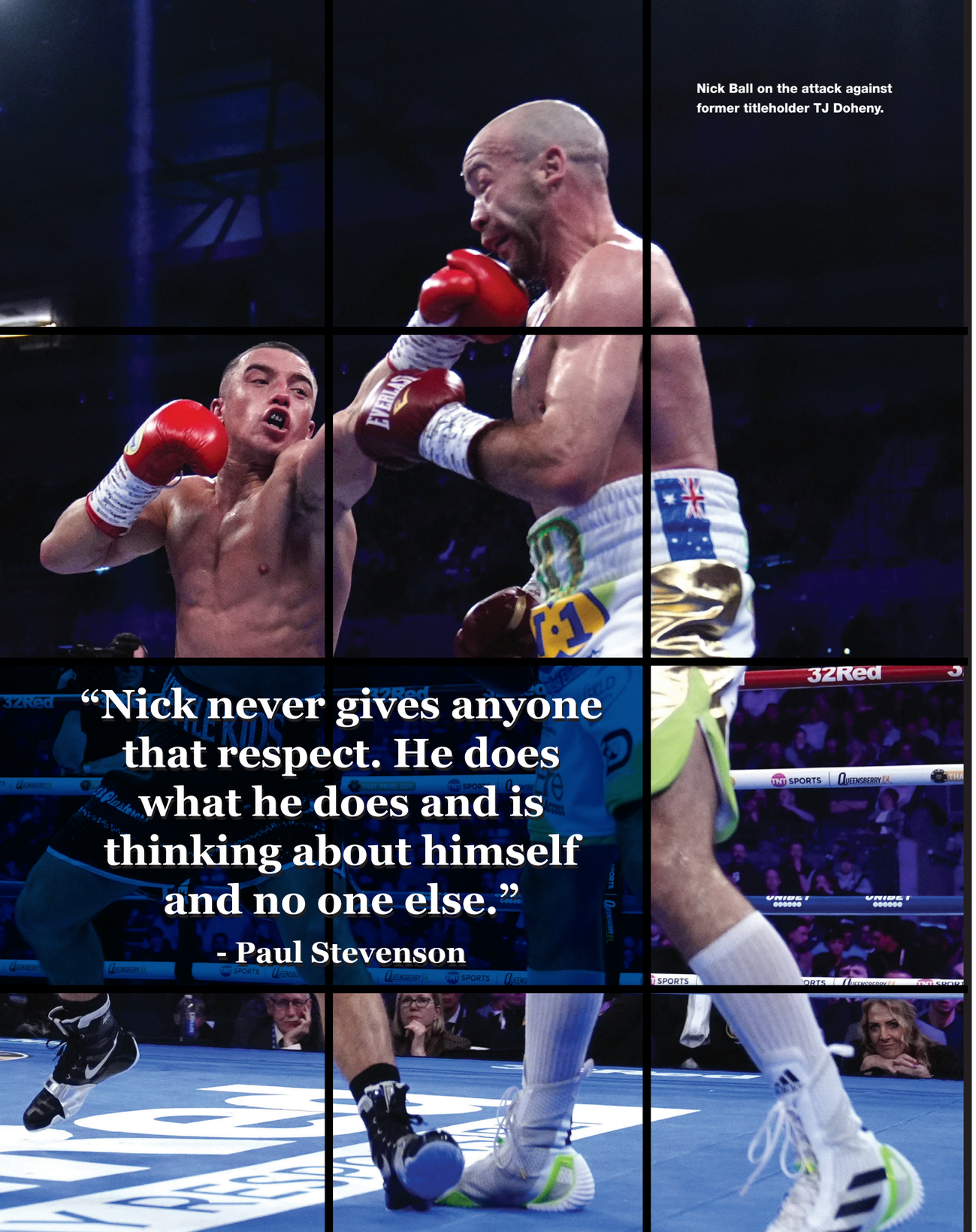
NICK BALL

RECORD: 22-0-1 (13 KOS)
STATUS: WBA FEATHERWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER/THE RING NO. 3 AT 126 POUNDS

Nick Ball's ferocious approach was on display for all to see when he annihilated compatriot Isaac Lowe on the Tyson Fury-Dillian Whyte undercard at Wembley Stadium in April 2022. However, few experts would have tabbed Ball as a future titleholder at that point.



John Iacono



Peter Byrne

Well, the educated pressure fighter from Liverpool has had the last laugh. In 2024, Ball faced arguably the two best featherweights in the world, back-to-back – Rey Vargas and Ray Ford – and despite coming away 1-0-1, most onlookers felt that he should have prevailed in both bouts. Vargas escaped with a controversial draw and his WBC title, while Ford surrendered the WBA strap to Ball in what was the American’s maiden defense.

The secret is out on Ball. He’s a beast of a featherweight, a no-nonsense warrior, and if he crosses swords with Inoue, then the Japanese superstar will have his work cut out for him.

“Most of the people Inoue has boxed have, quite rightly, been respectful of him and stood off,” said Ball’s trainer, Paul Stevenson. “They’ve given him all the respect in the world. Nick never gives anyone that respect. He does what he does and is thinking about himself and no one else. Will Inoue have seen someone take it to him in that way?

“And also, Nick isn’t just walking in. There’s a level of intellect to what Nick’s doing. You don’t just walk in against Vargas and Ray Ford. You don’t walk into those people without getting your head taken clean off unless you’ve got something special.”

Since his world title triumph against Ford, Ball has vanquished Ronny Rios and T.J. Doheny inside the distance. Neither man could cope with the relentless pressure-packed style of the diminutive but bull-like WBA titleholder, who punished them both mercilessly.

Granted, Inoue is a completely different proposition, but Stevenson isn’t the only one who believes his man has the tools to take down the pound-for-pound great.

“I made a statement after one of Nick Ball’s title defenses that I’d make him the favorite if Inoue comes up to featherweight,” said Carl Frampton, who unified at 122 and won a title at 126. “That’s not me being disrespectful, I love Inoue, but I just think Ball’s style, his tenacity, his ferocity and how strong and fit he is would be the difference in that fight.

“Again, I’m not bashing a great like Inoue. What he’s done has been absolutely incredible. He’s one of my favorite fighters to watch at the moment. But there is a ceiling for the smaller guys going up through the divisions. Nick Ball is a hard night’s work.”

Ball will likely make another defense of his title before the end of the year. If the chance to face Inoue arises, then you won’t need to ask him twice.

RAFAEL ESPINOZA

RECORD: 27-0 (23 KOS)
STATUS: WBO FEATHERWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER/THE RING NO. 1 AT 126 POUNDS

When Rafael Espinoza challenged then-WBO titleholder Robeisy Ramirez in December 2023, he was a significant underdog despite his overwhelming physical advantages.

“A 6-foot-1 featherweight? It’s insane, but Espinoza makes the weight, so fair play to him.”

“El Divino” (The Divine) is a 6-foot-1 featherweight with a 74-inch reach, which are record-breaking numbers for a titleholder in this weight class. For comparison purposes, the Mexican star’s dimensions are larger than those of reigning light heavyweight champion Dmitry Bivol, who is 6-feet tall with a wingspan of 72 inches.

But while Espinoza’s stats are terrifying, he can also fight. In the first encounter with Ramirez, the 31-year-old volume puncher got off the floor to drop and outpoint the Cuban lefty in a Fight of the Year contender. In the rematch, he came from behind to score a sixth-round TKO.

However, despite Espinoza’s size and obvious quality, not everyone is convinced.

“Espinoza hasn’t boxed at the level that Inoue has,” offered Gallagher. “When it comes to the big stage, big atmosphere, big ring walks, you don’t know how a fighter will perform. Inoue has been there; he’d be calm. There’s the possibility of a Donald Curry-Milton McCrory type of thing – slip inside, left hook, or slip inside, right hand.”

In the final fight of his illustrious career, Frampton faced a 5-foot-10 Jamel Herring for the WBO junior lightweight title. Past his best and dwarfed by his southpaw opponent, the Belfast star had very little success and succumbed to a sixth-round stoppage. As a result, the former champ knows all too well how problematic larger opponents can be.

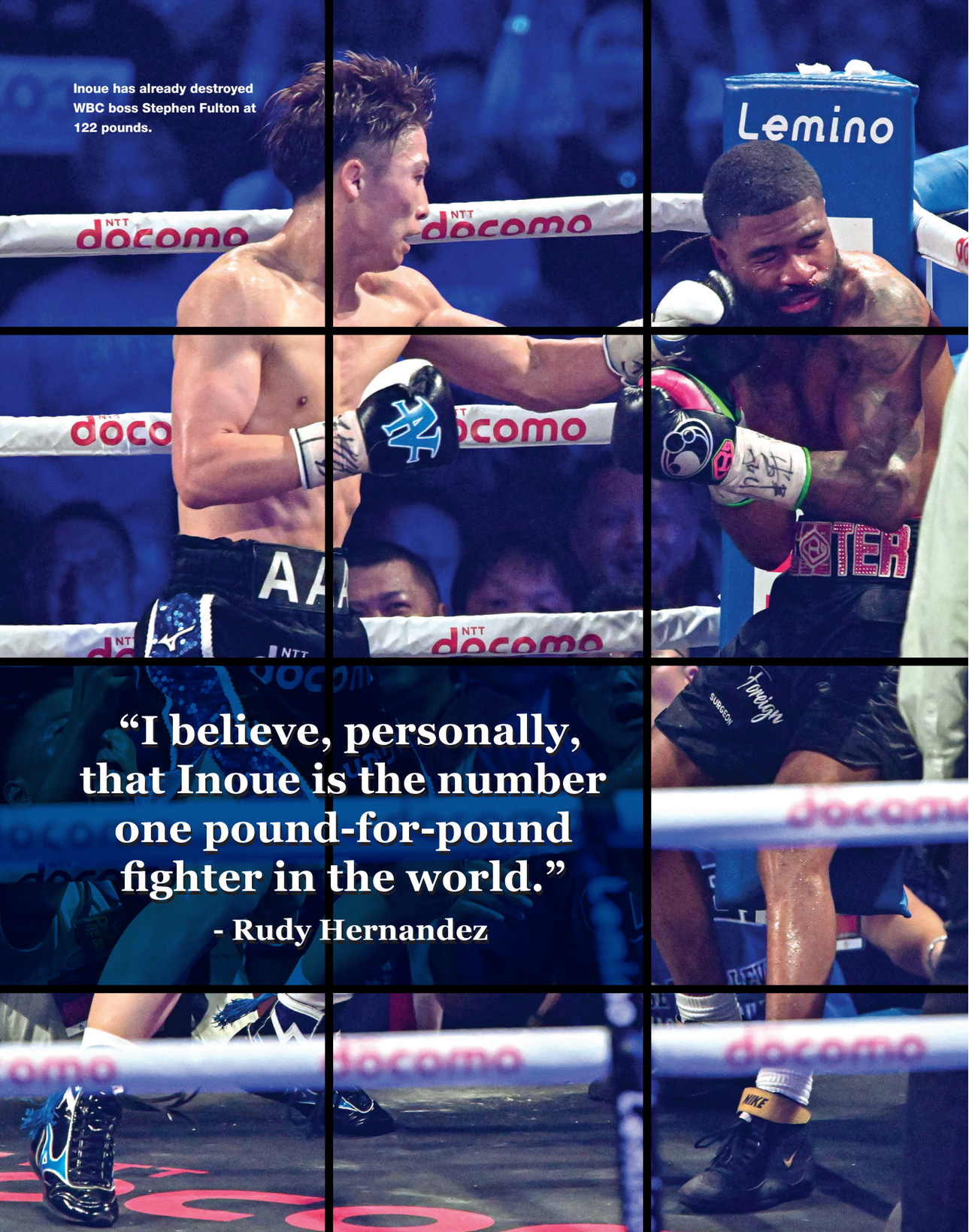
“It's almost to the point where, never mind weight divisions, there should be height divisions,” laughed Frampton. “A 6-foot-1 featherweight? It’s insane, but Espinoza makes the weight, so fair play to him.

“Inoue certainly has the boxing I.Q. and the acumen to be able to deal with someone like [Espinoza], but it’s just going to get harder. We’ve seen at [junior featherweight] he’s been hurt and on his backside.”

Espinoza called out The Monster as a future opponent after disposing of Edward Vazquez on the Inoue-Cardenas undercard in May. It’s doubtful that he’s next up, but, like Ball, this skyscraper Mexican would take the opportunity with both hands.

WHO’S NEXT?

If Inoue were to aim for the triple undisputed target, then, as things stand, he would have to deal with two other world titleholders.



Fulton: KAZUHIRO NOGI ; Cardenas: Naoki Fukuda

A PATH TO VICTORY?

By Steve Kim

When Naoya Inoue defends his undisputed junior featherweight crown versus Murodjon Akhmadaliev in September, a familiar face will be in the opposing corner: Joel Diaz.

The former lightweight title challenger, now a veteran trainer, led Ramon Cardenas into the ring against Inoue on May 4 in Las Vegas. Cardenas, a heavy underdog, gave “The Monster” and his followers a scare when he scored a hard knockdown in the second round of their rousing battle at the T-Mobile Arena. The San Antonio, Texas, native was eventually stopped in the eighth round, but a point was made:

This 122-pound version of Inoue is not infallible. As elite as Inoue is, the four-division titleholder makes mistakes that can be taken advantage of.

As the action unfolded that evening, Diaz took mental notes.

“I learned a lot,” Diaz told The Ring. “I learned that if Ramon would’ve had a little more experience, Ramon would’ve been successful in beating Inoue. But he needed that experience at the level that he didn’t have. For example, we trained Ramon that as soon as Inoue starts unloading on you, close the gap, clinch him, stop the action. He didn’t do it because he’s not used to that.

“Also there was one round where I told him, ‘Go forward. Make him go back.’ When he made Naoya go back, he was successful, but he wasn’t throwing enough punches. His volume was low. I noticed that if you apply pressure on Inoue and just walk him back with volume of work – attacking the body, uppercuts, staying low and countering him – you can beat him. I learned a lot, honestly.”

Akhmadaliev (13-1, 10 KOs), a 2016 Olympic bronze medalist from Uzbekistan, doesn’t have as many professional fights as Cardenas but is the more seasoned, battle-tested fighter at the world-class level. With his deep amateur pedigree, Akhmadaliev – like his Uzbekistani stablemates that train with Diaz in Indio, California – was moved at an accelerated pace as he entered the pro game.

He began his career boxing in six-round bouts and by his fourth outing was participating in scheduled 10-rounders. In just his eighth pro bout, he was paired against unified titleholder Danny Roman and won a 12-round split decision. Akhmadaliev made three defenses of the IBF and WBA belts before getting upset by Marlon Tapales via split nod in 2023.

It was a costly defeat, because he lost more than two world titles – his immediate shot at Inoue (who would defeat Tapales later that year) went down the drain also. Without the titles, Akhmadaliev was just another contender, but a dangerous one. Now he gets his turn as the WBA mandatory challenger.

Currently The Ring’s No. 2-rated junior featherweight, Akhmadaliev is a well-respected fighter. Like Luis Nery, who scored an opening-round knockdown against Inoue last May, he is a heavy-handed southpaw. Inoue has seemingly become a bit vulnerable to left hands in recent fights.

After the Cardenas fight, which followed Inoue’s knockout wins over TJ Doheny and Ye Joon Kim, Diaz, who is no stranger to pulling upsets, is now even more confident of Akhmadaliev’s chances against the Japanese superstar.

“MJ is a bit smarter [than Inoue’s recent competition] in the fact that he’s in, he’s out, he counters, and MJ has a little more volume [to his offense],” explained the respected trainer.

And then there is the size factor. Akhmadaliev is a natural 122-pounder, while it’s well-known that Inoue began his career as a junior flyweight, the 108-pound division. It’s clear that he is reaching his threshold in terms of how much higher he can move up.

“MJ is bigger; he’s bigger in every way,” said Diaz. “Inoue’s small. He was smaller than Ramon, and MJ’s bigger than Ramon. And he’s a lot slicker. He’s more experienced. He was an Olympian.” RING

STEPHEN FULTON

RECORD: 23-1 (8 KOS)
STATUS: WBC FEATHERWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER/THE RING NO. 4 AT 126 POUNDS

Stephen Fulton claimed the vacant WBC crown by posting a dominant 12-round unanimous decision over old foe Brandon Figueroa in February. It was a real momentum boost for Fulton, who injected life back into his career after Inoue had put it on life support.

In July 2023, Inoue dominated Fulton through seven rounds before scoring a pulverizing stoppage in the eighth, relieving the Philadelphia technician of two junior featherweight title belts in the process. While the rematch would take place in a new weight class, the manner of that defeat makes this one a tough sell.

ANGELO LEO

RECORD: 26-1 (12 KOS)
STATUS: IBF FEATHERWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER/THE RING NO. 2 AT 126 POUNDS

Angelo Leo is the dark horse of the 126-pound division. The New Mexico native toiled in obscurity after losing the WBO junior featherweight title to Fulton in 2021 but came out of nowhere to dethrone then-featherweight division leader Luis Alberto Lopez with a brutal one-punch knockout last August.

Nine months of inactivity is the last thing Leo needed following the biggest win of his career, because he needs to keep up the momentum if he’s to remain on the lips of fight fans. A razor-thin majority decision win over Japanese veteran Tomoki Kameda in May didn’t create the kind of buzz required to propel him into the Inoue sweepstakes. RING

A NEW BRITISH BREW

BOXING'S PERFECT STORM IS WHEN LONGTIME RIVALS CLASH AT THE PEAK OF THEIR POWERS, AND THERE ARE RUMBLES ON THE HORIZON FOR **DALTON SMITH** VS. **ADAM AZIM »**

By Adam Smith

Danny Lawson

James Chance

Rivalry: competition for the same objective or for superiority in the same field.

Years back, I stumbled across a skillful, hard-hitting and clever amateur who was capturing multiple titles at the British, European and world levels.

When Dalton Smith turned professional, I told the lovely young lad from Sheffield, England – and his new promoter, Eddie Hearn – that, built properly and with those feet remaining on the ground, he looked certain to become a world champion. What a fighter he has matured into.

As Smith was building toward his pro debut, I met another precocious youngster who had a completely different style – dazzling speed, footwork and power. While watching him win every national title from schoolboy to youth, I firmly believed this Slough teenager, Adam Azim, was also destined to be a world champion. When he secured a Sky Sports contract, promoter Ben Shalom brought him into HQ and Adam's been sensational ever since.

Smith and Azim had me fascinated from very early on. Not because we sort of share names, but because we share a love for boxing and for the best fighting the best.

Side by side now, these two up-and-comers in the 140-pound division draw ever closer to one of the biggest British clashes in recent years.

They fell for the sport at just 4 and 5 years old, so both have an immense pedigree. Both also possess a relentless work ethic and an extremely strong mindset.

They also have supportive families. Dalton is guided by his brilliant father, Grant, while Adam is surrounded by his parents and siblings and has an excellent coach in Shane McGuigan, who believes he is "the best fighter I have ever worked with." That's some statement from a trainer whose roster has included the likes of David Haye, George Groves, Josh Taylor, Carl Frampton and Daniel Dubois.

Smith recently turned 28. Azim will turn 23 this summer. Dalton is 18-0 with 13 knockouts, while Adam is a little behind with 10 stoppages in his 13 victories.

In terms of world-level credentials and resume, Smith has the edge. Recent victories over Jose Zepeda (TKO 5), Walid Ouizza (TKO 1) and Mathieu Germain (UD 12) were impressive enough to earn him the No. 9 spot in The Ring's junior welterweight rankings. However, Azim is closing in and looked excellent in stoppage triumphs over Ohara Davies (KO 8) and former titleholder Sergey Lipinets (TKO 9).

There is genuine respect between the two – they recently chatted and shook hands during a rare impromptu meeting at the Ben Whittaker-Liam Cameron show in Birmingham. But there is a steely confidence in each that is simmering down to a duel, and both were only too happy to share their thoughts for The Ring. I spoke to them on the same day, one after the other.

"The position I am at is roughly the plan I set out to do," Dalton told me.

"Traditional, right route. Feel like I've progressed well and I am coming into my prime now. I am in this position for a reason. I was the mandatory for the WBC before my last fight. Alberto Puello-Subriel Matias is in July. Then I am next. I am in touching distance of that world title. September time? I'd love to have it in Britain.

"You don't become a world champion overnight. I have beaten some good names. I am listening. It is one step at a time, and then the sky's the limit."

When I spoke to his rival, Azim responded with the same confidence in his own trajectory.

"My career's been very, very good," he stated.

"The step-ups have been amazing; I feel the matchmaking has been completely on point. I am developing, climbing the ladder. I want the bigger world stage and all the belts."

But there are plans to take over the world, and then there are plans of a more local nature. The mere mention of his Sheffield nemesis ignited the fuse:

"I am ready for Dalton Smith right now. I know I will beat him. I know I will stop him. He keeps saying he has my number – the only number he is getting is the 10 count!"

Dalton gave his own take:

"There are people on my side, people on his – that is what makes this incredibly exciting. I have always given Adam credit for what he's done."

But he couldn't resist twisting the knife just a bit:

"I do though feel he has a lot of developing to do," Dalton continued. "I'm confident I'll beat Adam. The rivalry is growing nicely. I would love this to happen so much. At the right time.

"Yes, Adam is a very sharp counterpuncher and he has power. But to reach the top, you need a little bit of everything, and I believe I have much more in my armory. I think I will outsmart him in every department – my feet, angles, speed, I would set him many traps. Adam is a little one-dimensional. He has a style which really suits me.

"Shane saw me close-up at 21. I am a much better fighter now, and I'm very, very confident that I will stop him."

Adam has heard all of this before: "[Dalton] can say what he likes, but I saw him spar Luke Campbell, and Luke won every round," said Azim. "I have never sparred Dalton. I was 18, just turning pro. Totally different now.

"Many believe Dalton wins," he continued. "He is a very good fighter, but I am just different. He's never faced anyone like me. I really want to prove a point. I can't wait to smash him up and shut the critics up."

The backdrop for this perfect storm is that they are both in a classic division – the best 140-pounders have always possessed a potent blend of ring intelligence, speed and power.

Ricky Hatton lit up the junior welterweight brigade in the early 2000s, but unfortunately we never saw his deep rivalry with countryman Junior Witter come to fruition. Their different personalities and styles were kept apart, much to the frustration of us broadcasters, the fans and – more than anyone – the fighters themselves. The argument still rages: Who would have been king of the junior welterweights in the U.K.? Hatton or Witter? Both had cracking careers independently – but what dance partners they could have been!

Adam Davy

Mathieu Germain feels the Smith hook during their clash in Sheffield.

Bitter British enemies Amir Khan and Kell Brook danced around each other for years. We tried so hard to get them into a ring, but it took way too long. Although there was a highly anticipated buildup, their eventual February 2022 clash was too one-sided toward Kell to warrant a rematch.

A worthy rematch is exactly what we were treated to when Carl Froch and George Groves elevated British boxing in 2013 and 2014. Their grudge match was one of the most acrimonious we have seen, with needle-a-plenty after that thunderous and controversial first encounter – Froch scored a ninth-round stoppage in a tough fight that many, Groves most of all, felt was still playing out – led to an unforgettable rematch in which Froch won by KO 8 in front of 80,000 at Wembley Stadium.

Chris Eubank and Nigel Benn had been the epitome of ring rivals in 1990. Polar opposites in every way. And after their feud provided millions watching with awesome action and spectacular theater, their sons Chris Jr. and Conor picked up the mantle and repeated the feat in 2025.

A turbulent buildup amidst eggs, arrows, threats and accusations saw almost 70,000 descend on Tottenham's supreme stadium for The Ring's inaugural event on April 26. The atmosphere ripped with electricity; Chris Sr. showed up at the very last moment, the ring walks were simply astounding, and what followed was a 12-round Fight

of the Year candidate that Eubank won by unanimous decision.

There may be a rematch as we clamor for more fun and games: roller-coaster storytelling, bluff and bravado, extreme entertainment and real dislike for each other.

The rivalry that now spans three decades is a boon for fighters and fans alike – one of many developments that have taken place in boxing with the investments of Riyadh Season and the rise of Turki Alalshikh as the face of this new era. As with other rivalries that currently simmer on the fringes, the hope is that Smith-Azim can join the movement and become a reality so that we won't miss out on another awesome match, as fans did when Joe Calzaghe-Carl Froch was confined to the boxing rubble. We are just so disappointed when major fights don't happen.

Azim battered ex-world titleholder Sergey Lipinets.

"Now [that] Turki is around and the promoters are working together, it is so easy to be made once the time is right," Smith told me.

On this, Azim agreed: "Riyadh Season really helps," he said.

"Turki's been putting everything on. We need to get it over the line. It can't slip away. Turki can make this. And if we both win world titles first, it will be much bigger."

But of course that stab is always at the ready: "Dalton's not as big a name yet – needs more exposure."

They are both serious names within the British boxing trade, of course, but the key to a mega-event is breaking through to the casual fan. As a means to that end, these nice, authentic guys may need to up their trash-talk game. There is nothing quite like bad blood to sell a fight, and we will surely need a little more.

"I might have to play bad cop to his good cop," said Azim.

One notable British rivalry that became a memorable trilogy happened in 2003-05, involving Jamie Moore and Michael Jones. Their series might have been a little lost outside of North West England, but I was fortunate enough to be ringside for all three, and they just got better and better.

Moore won the decider in an up-and-down war and should have gone on to become a world champion. Instead, these days Jamie is a world-class trainer, passing his vast knowledge to the next generation.

Jamie is in the neutral corner with Adam and Dalton – and explains the excitement inside boxing about this potentially massive showdown:

"Adam Azim is very, very good; his jab is beautiful, lovely lateral movement, his timing, one of the best prospects we have. I have been really impressed with him. Stylistically like Amir Khan."

"Will he become a world champion?" I asked Jamie.

"Yes. With time, they shouldn't rush him. There are a lot of fights that he should take, that he might struggle with, but in the long run, when he meets the best fighters in the world, he'll be better equipped to win. Take the proper lessons on board."

"Dalton Smith is a phenomenal fighter," Jamie continues.

"He's been down to our gym sparring with Jack Catterall, and I rate him really highly. Dalton has done a little more than Adam. Dipping his toe into world level. He's been more adventurous and calculated."

"Dalton will become a world champion," Jamie continues, "and I would imagine that Adam Azim will become a world champion and that an all-British unification fight will be absolutely enormous. Turki has come along and has been phenomenal for boxing, and he will be the reason why eventually this fight happens. Instead of us having the scenario we had [with] Kell Brook and Amir Khan – where it never happened at the right time. It was too late."

Mark Robinson

"But when is the right time?" I asked.

"Not yet! Both guys were scheduled to fight each other, but it didn't happen. Adam vacated his European title with Dalton the mandatory, probably because his team felt it wasn't the right time. That was the right decision; why take the risk at this embryonic stage? When they do eventually box, it will be far bigger and both will get the right rewards."

So they met in Birmingham and turned down a face-off because we are not there yet. Genuinely they aren't really going to disrespect each other, but there is underlying tension.

"A hundred percent I believe Adam will win a world title – and so will I," Dalton said. "But we all know who doesn't want the fight – them. We tried to make it for the European – he vacated. The only people who didn't want it was their side. Now the goal is to go and win these world titles. I actually think they are right not taking it now. Shane knows.

"The problem for them is I am going to get better.

"It will happen within the next 18 months. Adam has already tried to say some things. The fire is now burning. I dared him to say it to my face – not a response. He wasn't as cocky then."

"Come on," Adam says. "I don't hate him. I have respect for him. But face to face in Birmingham, he didn't engage and hid behind the cameras!"

"Do you think we are looking at 2026?" I asked Jamie Moore.

"That looks right," he replied.

"Their styles will definitely gel when they do meet and they are around together. Adam – you know that you need someone to do it with you to fully secure your future. I firmly believe they are each other's dance partners.

"I would have one or both fighting for a world title before the end of this year, and then by the summer of next year I would have them selling out a stadium in England. Maybe Hillsborough."

Or Anfield, I thought. I have spoken to Liverpool's CEO Billy Hogan and he would love to host boxing. Adam has met Kostas Tsimikas and is often seen training with his Liverpool shirt on. The club's in fine fettle – rather like these two.

Jamie supports Manchester United, so he would hate it at Liverpool – but, like all of us in the fight fraternity wouldn't miss this for the world.

"Which corner would you like to have control of on the night, and whose arm will be raised?" I ask him at the end of our absorbing chat.

"Ooogh …"

Jamie thought for a minute.

"I'll go with Dalton Smith – I just feel he's a little more equipped and experienced to go into a fight like that."

The beauty with Smith-Azim is that everyone has an opinion and a country is divided, so I left the last words to the two marvelous young proteges.

"It will be a very good buildup," Dalton said.

"Stylistically – a great clash which will be really entertaining for 4 or 5 rounds. Then I stop him and that is when you will find out the truth. 6 or 7 rounds."

"Levels above him," countered Azim. "I want to win world titles in different weight classes – and conquer all divisions up to [junior middleweight]. I'm going to make a massive statement: 100% I will stop Dalton. In less than five rounds."

I told Adam that Dalton predicted he will take him out in six or seven.

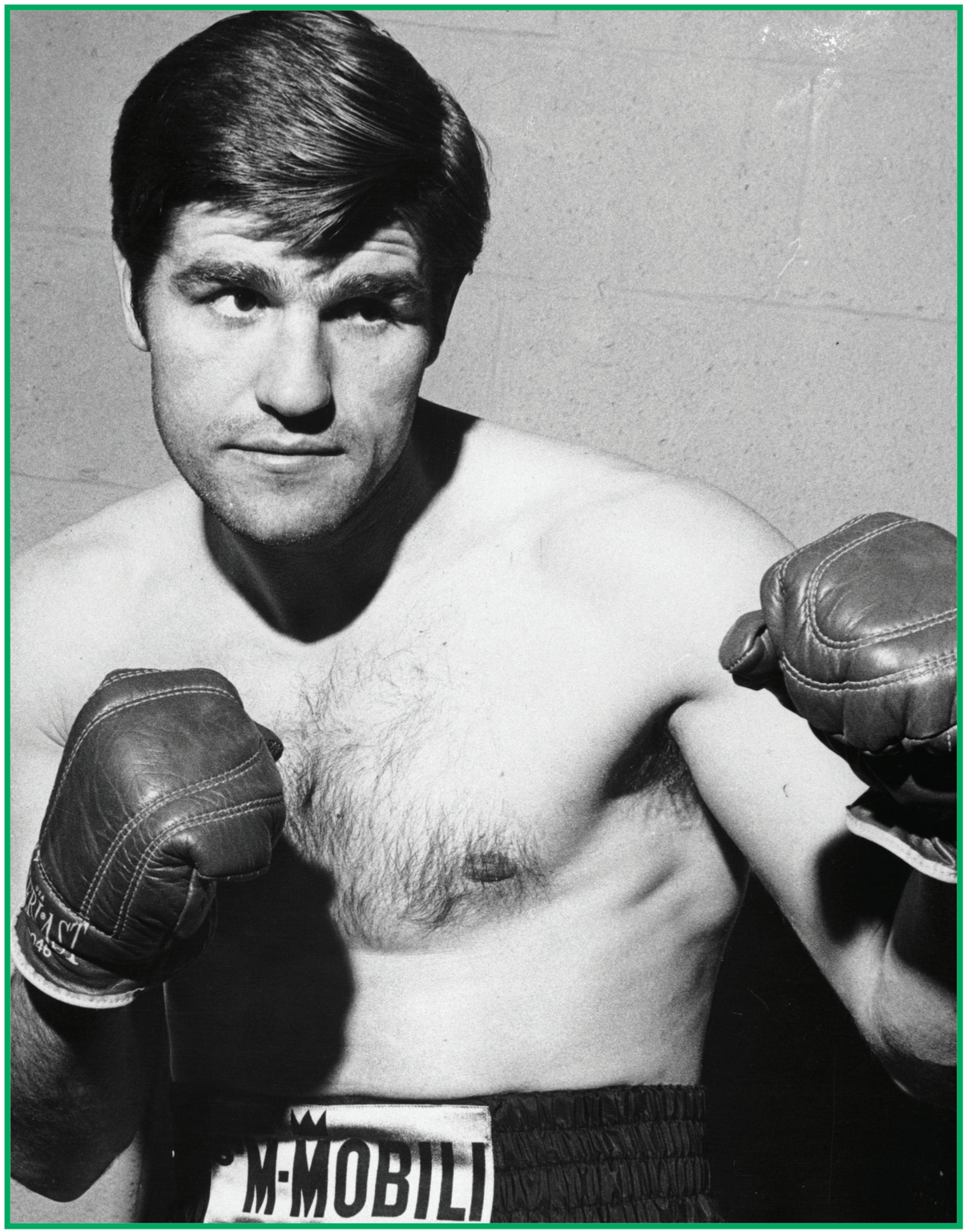
"He's not going to be stopping me," Adam responded.

"I am going to knock him out. He's in for a very rude awakening. It will be one of the biggest fights like Froch-Groves, Eubank-Benn – HUGE."

I promise you: This will be worth waiting for.

Adam and Dalton have both committed fully to boxing since they were kids, and they – and we – deserve their explosive mix of elite quality to come to fruition for the good of our wonderful sport.

Not now, but soon. Really very soon. Please. And please, can I call it? RING



Bettmann

La Dolce Vita

NINO BENVENUTI'S CHARMED CAREER BROUGHT HIM OLYMPIC GOLD, MULTIPLE WORLD TITLES AND THE LOVE OF A NATION

by Lee Groves

Throughout the years, the film industry has produced dozens of boxing movies whose central characters epitomized strength, courage, resiliency and success. To maximize the effect, casting agents hired the most photogenic men possible, including Kirk Douglas (*Champion*), John Wayne (*The Quiet Man*), Tony Curtis (*Flesh and Fury* and *The Square Jungle*), Denzel Washington (*The Hurricane*) and even the "King of Rock and Roll," Elvis Presley (*Kid Galahad*).

Giovanni "Nino" Benvenuti, who died in Rome on May 20 at age 87, could have chosen to pursue a career in modeling or acting, because he possessed that enviable combination of magnetic good looks and undeniable charisma. And indeed, according to the Rotten Tomatoes website, he appeared in four films between 1969-2008, the last of which was *Carnera: The Walking Mountain*, in which he played a trainer named "M. Baer" alongside F. Murray Abraham, Paul Sorvino and Burt Young. But Benvenuti, the son of an amateur boxer, opted to become a boxer himself, and from the time he first pulled on the gloves at age 13 until he announced his retirement at 33, he experienced more success than anyone had a right to expect.

As an amateur, he was prolific, amassing a record of either 120-0 or 119-1, depending on the source. Moreover, he won five consecutive Italian welterweight amateur titles (1956-1960), two European championships (1957, 1959) and a gold medal at the 1960 Olympics in Rome. Additionally, Benvenuti was awarded the Val Barker Trophy that is given to the Games' most outstanding boxer. The men he beat out for the honor included lightweight silver medalist and future undisputed 140-pound champion Sandro Lopopolo, lightweight bronze medalist (and 1956 Olympic champion) Dick McTaggart, junior middleweight bronze medalist Boris Lagutin (a future two-time gold medalist), and a lightning-quick light heavyweight gold medalist named Cassius Marcellus Clay, who would later be known as Muhammad Ali. Bruno Arcari, who along with Benvenuti is considered one of the best boxers ever produced by Italy, reportedly said that Nino was even better as an amateur than he was as a professional. High praise indeed.

Benvenuti's incredible success continued into the pros as he began his career with 65 consecutive victories, the second-longest winning streak from the start of a career in boxing history, behind Julio Cesar Chavez's 87, and one of only three career-starting strings of 60 or more (Willie Pep was the other). The 5-foot-11 Benvenuti used his abnormally long wingspan (75 inches), lively legs and quick-twitch reflexes to outbox and out-fox his opponents, and he built the foundation for his future successes with wins over Isaac Logart, Tommaso Truppi (for the Italian middleweight championship), 137-fight veteran Gaspar Ortega and former 154-pound titleholder Denny Moyer.

Those wins, in part, earned him a crack at undisputed junior middleweight champion (and countryman) Sandro Mazzinghi, whose 40-1 (28 KOs) record included a 24-fight winning streak. Their June 1965 showdown drew a reported 40,000 to the Stadio San Siro in Milan, and the electrifying atmosphere was only exceeded by the punch that ended the fight in Round 6 – a massive right uppercut that landed on Mazzinghi's jaw and dropped him like a sack of cement.

Benvenuti added the vacant European middleweight championship two fights later by stopping Luis Folledo in Round 6.

In the contractually mandated Mazzinghi rematch, Benvenuti's sneaky power showed itself once again as he floored the former champion with a hair-trigger hook in Round 2, but the remainder of the fight was a bitterly contested nip-and-tuck affair that was reflected in the final scores, which favored Benvenuti (71-70, 68-66 and 69-65 under the five-point must system).

Benvenuti's next three fights were staged at 160 as he outpointed Don Fullmer and Clarence James, then successfully defended his European title with a 14th-round TKO over Germany's Jupp Elze in Berlin, Benvenuti's first professional fight outside Italy. Six weeks later, Benvenuti returned to 154 and trekked to Seoul, South Korea, to face Ki Soo Kim, whom he had defeated by a 5-0 decision in the third round of the 1960 Olympics. Kim was so incensed by that verdict that he remained inside the ring for an hour before being persuaded to leave, and he reportedly vowed that the decision would be reversed someday. June 25, 1966, ended up being that day, thanks to a confluence of circumstances.

First, Benvenuti admitted he took Kim lightly.

"When I trained to fight Ki Soo Kim, I wasn't so focused like when I trained for Emile Griffith," he told The Sweet Science writer Luca De Franco in 2005. "Who the hell was this Kim? I'm supposed to knock him out fast."

And second, fate – or perhaps something more sinister – intervened, and Benvenuti called this incident "one of the most shameful pages in boxing history."

Following the 13th round, the springs holding the ring ropes suddenly broke, forcing a lengthy timeout. Here is Benvenuti's version of events:

"I dominated Ki Soo Kim, knocking him down during the [14th] round," he said. "He got up and made it until the end of the round. During the interval, somebody approached the ring and broke one of the columns where the ropes were tied. They needed more than 15 minutes to repair the column. When the [15th] round began, Ki Soo Kim had enough energy to last three more minutes. That was their purpose. Anyway, they couldn't even get a unanimous decision for their man: One of the judges gave it to me. I never lost to him in the first place! If the match was held anywhere else, I would have got a unanimous decision by a wide margin of points. Unfortunately, we were fighting in Seoul."

With the loss, Benvenuti's historic winning streak ended, as did his time at 154. Six consecutive wins at middleweight in Italy earned Benvenuti a chance to win Emile Griffith's championship. Their April 1967 battle in New York was an instant classic. Both men hit the canvas – Griffith from a right uppercut late in the second, Benvenuti from a right to the ear midway through the fourth – but Benvenuti's quicker hands, nimbler feet, sharp counterpunching and superior ring generalship earned him the unanimous decision in what was later named The Ring's Fight of the Year.

The victory garnered Benvenuti the cover of The Ring's September 1967 issue, which asked if he was "Italy's greatest ever." It also secured an immediate rematch with Griffith five and a half months later at New York City's Shea Stadium. A hard hook midway through the first broke Benvenuti's nose – a nose that had undergone plastic surgery after the first meeting. That, combined with Griffith's 14th-round knockdown, vaulted the Virgin Islands native to a title-regaining majority decision. Their rubber match on March 4, 1968, was on the first fight card staged at the current Madison Square Garden, and, as one might have expected, the action was pulsating as Benvenuti consolidated his early lead with a ninth-round knockdown and Griffith staged a furious rally in the final three frames. That rally fell just short, and Benvenuti regained the title by a narrow but unanimous 15-round decision.

Benvenuti's second middleweight title reign featured many more twists and turns: He overcame a seventh-round knockdown before out-pointing Don Fullmer in December 1968, lost a non-title 10-rounder against Dick Tiger five months later, then benefited from a strange seventh-round DQ win over Fraser Scott due to what the referee called butting and Scott labeled as ducking. He produced a come-from-behind, one-punch 11th-round KO over Luis Rodriguez that earned Ring's 1968 Round of the Year award, then suffered an injury-marred, eighth-round non-title TKO loss to Tom Bethea, only to stop Bethea in eight with the championship on the line. In another non-title bout, he secured a 10th-round TKO win against Doyle Baird in a rematch of their October 1968 draw. All that led to a confrontation with Carlos Monzon, who handed Benvenuti his first-ever defeat on Italian soil with a crushing 12th-round right to the jaw. Fittingly, Monzon-Benvenuti was named The Ring's 1970 Fight of the Year.

Benvenuti's professional erosion continued with a second straight loss in Italy – a 10-round majority decision against Jose Chirino in March 1971 – and it was completed with a third-round TKO loss to Monzon in the May 1971 rematch staged in Monaco. Benvenuti, now wealthy and professionally fulfilled, announced his retirement and exited the ring with an 82-7-1 (35 KOs) record. From there, he enjoyed a successful post-boxing life that included volunteer work in India, commentary for RAI Italia and ownership of a high-end restaurant. He was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1992.

Benvenuti moonlighted as an actor during his ring career.

Gianni Ferrari

Benvenuti at war with fellow Hall of Famer Emile Griffith.

Bettmann

Upon his death, Italian prime minister Giorgia Meloni called Benvenuti "an extraordinary champion and a symbol of an Italy that is proud, courageous and capable of rising again," while Giovanni Malago, the president of the Italian National Olympic Committee, praised Benvenuti as "a true role model" for his approachability and kindness. That kindness enabled him to form lasting bonds with the often-brooding Monzon (whom he visited when Monzon was in prison) as well as with the gregarious Griffith, who was named godfather to Benvenuti's son. He was an early idol of future middleweight champion Vito Antuofermo and, until May 20, he was boxing's oldest surviving world champion.

Although Benvenuti suffered his share of losses and disappointments, they are far outweighed by his successes in and out of the ring as well as by the high esteem he earned as a human being. His impact on boxing will far outlive his time on earth, and that in itself is as good as it gets.

Lee Groves is a boxing writer and historian based in Friendly, West Virginia. He is the author of Tales from the Vault: A Celebration of 100 Boxing Closet Classics and the co-author of Muhammad Ali: By the Numbers. You can contact him via email at l.groves@frontier.com or send him a message via Facebook and X (@leegrovesboxing). RING

FLOAT LIKE A BEE

AS THE MOST PROMISING AMERICAN HEAVYWEIGHT IN A HEAVILY MULTINATIONAL DIVISION, **RICHARD TORREZ JR.** IS A NEW "HOPE" FOR TRADITIONALISTS – BUT HIS MOTIVATIONS ARE MORE PERSONAL

By Thomas Gerbasi

Ian Maule

Richard Torrez Jr. just quoted Marcus Aurelius to me.

Thirty years in the boxing business, and that's never happened before and may not happen again. And while I already knew that the heavyweight from Tulare, California, is one of the most intriguing personalities in a sport full of them, now everyone else can get in on the secret.

The topic was whether the multifaceted high school valedictorian turned Olympic silver medalist ever wondered if he'd made the right decision to turn pro in a sport that doesn't embrace American heavyweights like it used to.

"I read a book by Marcus Aurelius, and he says a tree doesn't wonder why it bears fruit. A bee doesn't wonder why it makes honey. Don't wonder why you're doing what you're doing and just do it to your fullest," responded Torrez. "You're meant to be here and you're doing it for a reason. So that's kind of the mindset I'm taking on that. So I'm not going to wonder if I made the right move or not the right move, but this is my life and I'm going to live it to the fullest."

He's all in. And he's navigating shark-infested waters like a seasoned swimmer thus far. Since picking up his medal in the Tokyo Games, Torrez has won all 13 of his pro bouts, with 11 of those wins coming by way of knockout. In April, he faced

his toughest test to date in Italy's Guido Vianello and emerged with a clear-cut unanimous decision victory.

"I feel like there's always a lot of things that I can work on, and I think that fight gives a great platform for me to start building more," Torrez stated. "But, with that being said, Guido was kind of a staple name as a contender. He fought some really good guys and he had some great fights with some of the guys that are in the top 10 as well, and I'm really proud of the accomplishment of winning that. And I do think that it kind of put me in contention for a lot of these top-10 guys."

He's right. But here's the catch: When Torrez gets to that top 10, he will find himself as the lone American challenging a group of contenders hailing from the U.K., New Zealand, Germany, Croatia, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria, and led by Ukrainian Oleksandr Usyk.

Richard, how does it feel to be the Great American Hope?

"I don't really know if I see myself as a great American hope," said Torrez, not exactly comfortable with having the dreams of a nation placed on his shoulders. "I see myself as just the kid from a small town in the USA with big dreams, big aspirations and who is working hard to achieve that. And if people want to get behind that train, then I'm all for it. But I'm not really promoting myself as the great American hope, just the everyday guy that worked hard and put his nose to the grindstone."

It's understandable. Having a 250-plus-pound man trying to punch you in the face is stressful enough. Navigating the business adds to that. And now we want him to rescue American boxing as well.

So, how did we get here in the land that produced some of the sport's great heavyweights? Is it as bad as it looks?

"The heavyweight division in the United States is basically dormant," said Lou DiBella, a Hall of Fame-inducted promoter and television executive who ran the boxing program at HBO during perhaps the last golden age for American heavyweights in the 1990s. "The truth of the matter is everyone wants to talk about the greatness of Usyk, and I'm on board with that. But if you go to the average person in the United States, they cannot tell you who the heavyweight champion of the world is. And it's even worse than that; the average sports fan cannot tell you who the heavyweight champion of the world is. And that's the quantum difference between boxing in America in 2025 and boxing in America in 1995, and particularly boxing in America in 1975.

"The power of the heavyweight champion of the world has diminished in terms of his stature in the general sports world in that same period of time. But nothing like it's diminished in the United States."

Among the U.S. contingent are former titleholders Deontay Wilder and Andy Ruiz Jr., Torrez's Top Rank stablemate Jared Anderson, Michael Hunter and the man who oddly still

Buda Mendes

Torrez lost to Bakhodir Jalolov in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic final.

remains in the mix, Jarrell Miller. It's far from a distinguished lineup, and with Torrez and Anderson the only ones under the age of 30, the future looks as bleak as the present.

"I think if we talk about any decline of boxing, it starts with the grassroots," said Torrez. "And I think [the way] to fix that and bring boxing back in a way that everyone will really appreciate it is to start funding these grassroots organizations like USA Boxing and the amateur programs that got everyone to where they needed to be. It's really hard to have a great pro if you just want to start them out as a pro. You need those grassroots, the kids that are going through this at 8, 9, 10 years old, being able to experience what boxing is really like and fall in love with the sport. I think that's what needs to change a little bit in order to bring American boxing back."

Two-handed punching power has given Torrez 11 KOs in 13 professional fights.

DiBella agrees with Torrez's assessment that the amateur boxing system in the United States is far removed from the glory days of 1976 and 1984, when an Olympic medal of any sort would be a ticket to big money and big opportunities in the pro game. And he adds that with other sports providing another path for talented young athletes, boxing is an option but not a particularly attractive one.

"NBA salaries, NFL salaries and Major League Baseball salaries have exploded," said DiBella. "And particularly the kind of salaries that would apply to a tremendous athlete who weighs over 200 pounds and is 6-2, 6-3 or above. Those guys all have way better alternatives [in] other sports. And that's the bottom line. Nobody's investing in young kids to turn them into heavyweights in the United States, and the amateur program stinks. There's a lot of reasons for it, but it's not a great time to be an American heavyweight."

At one time, boxing was an escape for kids in the United States, a way out in a world where the options weren't as plentiful as they are now. A tough kid with a big punch could parlay that into some good money in the ring. A talented athlete with a heavyweight's build could get in line to challenge for boxing's greatest prize.

Al Bello

Gerry Cooney was one of those kids, with not only the punch but also the build to transform his life. And with a robust amateur and pro boxing system in his native New York, the stage was set for him to succeed. And succeed he did, becoming a legit heavyweight contender who defeated Ken Norton, Jimmy Young and Ron Lyle before losing in a memorable championship fight with Larry Holmes in 1982. Today, it's not the same.

"They moved on," said Cooney. "There's so many other sports and so many things that heavyweights can do. And now, these guys, I don't know how it happened, but it must be in the milk. They went from 6-3, 6-4, 6-5, 220, 230, and all of a sudden they're 6-9, 6-10, 300 pounds."

That's bad news for fighters like Torrez, who checked in for the Vianello fight at 6-foot-2, 229¼. He's shown no issues competing against bigger opponents thus far. But when they are also better, some wonder if the Californian will simply be overwhelmed physically.

"Styles make fights, and my style is very good for [facing] a tall fighter," said Torrez. "I think that me being able to come inside and work hard, me pushing that pace, you get a big guy, they're going to need a really big tank to last all those rounds. And having a smaller stature and being able to move quicker around the ring, I think it plays really well into the heavyweight style. Especially nowadays, a lot of these heavyweights, they want to throw one-hitter quitters. They don't rely on conditioning anymore. They don't even rely on technique too much. But they know they have power – and a lot of these guys do have power. So there's always an equalizer. But I think having the fundamentals and just having a tank on you is going to take anybody pretty far in this game."

If you think Torrez is flustered by any of this talk of being the last American standing and about what he doesn't have, as opposed to what he does, you'd be mistaken. Because for all the options he has in life, he's a fighter. He was not thinking about becoming a tight end in football or a point guard in basketball. In fact, he doesn't think things are as bad as they seem these days.

"There's less promotion of boxing nowadays, but, at the same time, if I'm stopped on the side of the street and someone's playing basketball, someone's playing football and there's two guys fighting, I'm going to watch the guys fighting," said Torrez. "So I don't think boxing has lost its flavor at all. I just think maybe it's a little under-promoted. And a lot of these kids, they see the professional guys that made it already, but they don't see the grind that goes into it. And if you're a kid going to football, you at least see a pathway. You see, oh, high school, college, this is where it goes. You don't really have a pathway in boxing, or at least not a publicized pathway. So if we can just fund the grassroots and get a pathway for these kids to know that, hey, I can have all that and more. Because I'll tell you what: If I was a kid and I knew that people would cheer my team or would cheer [my name], I'd want them to cheer my name. I'm a little selfish in that sense. (laughs) I want people to cheer for me, and I think that other kids might be able to resonate with that as well and to just have a pathway to see that dream come true."

If boxing ever appoints a czar to take over things and save the sport, Torrez might be the guy for the job. But all jokes aside, one of the reasons why he's been anointed the next big thing for American heavyweight boxing is because we believe he can handle that pressure. That's not something someone is born with. It comes from someplace, and Torrez believes he can pinpoint exactly where.

"I honestly believe it's because I grew up in a fishbowl in a small farm town, and my dad was a teacher and an administrator in the local high school," he said. "So if I ever did anything wrong or thought about doing anything wrong, the teacher would be like, 'Do you want me to tell your dad?' So I always had to grow up knowing that whatever I did, I was going to end up getting caught, because there's only like 15 people there and everyone knows everybody. I think that helped a lot in my professional career because, on a bigger scale, everyone's watching you. There's always cameras around. There's always something going on. And so you might as well learn to act proper when the lights aren't on, because there might be a camera on you still."

By now, you'll probably agree that Torrez has the story, personality and drive to be a star. Now all that's left is to see if he can not just be the Great American Hope, but the Next Great American Heavyweight.

"You've just got to think that somebody is meant to be here and show up," said Cooney. "Somebody really special."

Maybe Richard Torrez Jr. is that somebody.

"I'm not really sure if I look at the rankings and I'm like, 'Where's everybody else in the USA at?'" he laughs. "I'm looking at where I'm at. I'm trying to achieve a goal for myself, and I'm very proud that the USA flag is right next to my name in these rankings. But I want that flag to be on top."

And, for the record, he's still got a healthy fear of his father.

"I'm still afraid of somebody telling Dad," Torrez laughs. "He's always the head honcho. But this is what I've dreamed of. This is what I've worked so hard for, and I'm ready for it. The good and the bad. I can't wait to be able to come back and tell everybody it was worth it. The biggest thing is that I want to make sure that the sacrifices not only I made, but my entire family made, were worth it. My dad missing Christmas, New Year's, all these things to help train me, missing my sister's birthday, my mom having to tear out her hair every time I fight. I want to make sure that their sacrifices and my sacrifices weren't in vain. And that's what I'm working so hard for." RING

EYE TO EYE

WHETHER AS A THEATER FOR OPTICAL WARFARE OR JUST PLAIN THEATER, THE PRE-FIGHT STAREDOWN HAS LONG BEEN A FAVORITE TACTIC OF FIGHTERS LOOKING TO GAIN AN EDGE »

By Don Stradley

When Tyson Fury and Oleksandr Usyk stared at each other for 11 minutes prior to their bout last December, the boxing world reacted as if history had been made. People were highly impressed by the sheer audacity of two professional boxers acting like, well, a couple of stray dogs who had encountered each other in a vacant lot, ears back, each daring the other to make a move.

It was intense, it was silly, and whether it was meaningful in any way is debatable. It's also doubtful that either of these two accomplished veterans of the ring were particularly bothered by the other's stare. For all we know, each wanted to break away and get to the buffet spread. Yet the Fury-Usyk staredown may someday take its place alongside other eccentric boxing moments, certainly up there with Ricardo Mayorga's victory cigarette or Tony Galento wrestling an octopus. A British TV analyst even offered a running commentary during the standoff. "It's amazing," he said, "They're not even blinking. It's like looking at a pair of waxworks at Madame Tussauds." Without irony, his colleague added, "We've gone to a different level."

But a different level of what? Despite its massive length, which was roughly the same as a three-round fight (with rest periods), Usyk and Fury were two guys dressed as Austin Powers giving us a glorified schoolyard game. Besides, while it may be hard to believe, an even longer staredown took place years ago.

Though there's no footage to prove it, an epic staredown occurred in the office of the Illinois State Athletic Commission in April 1954. After being examined for their impending bout, middleweight champion Bobo Olson and welterweight king Kid Gavilan posed together for photographers. The Associated Press reported that long after the cameras stopped clicking, the pair stayed eye-to-eye until a full 15 minutes had passed. Olson broke a few times, while the "Keed" stared at his opponent "most fiercely and steadily." The AP headline roared, "GAVILAN TRIUMPHS OVER OLSON IN STARING CONTEST."

Joe Calzaghe (right) did all he could to get inside Bernard Hopkins' head.

Olson went on to win a spirited 15-round majority decision, proving that a staredown smackdown doesn't always predict what will happen in the ring. Still, many fighters have used staring as an opening gambit, including some greats from the far gone past.

John L. Sullivan had a withering scowl that reportedly struck fear in the hearts of opponents, while Jack Dillon, James Jeffries, Stanley Ketchel, Sam Langford and Young Corbett were all said to be masters of the staring game. Bob Fitzsimmons was known for his "hypnotic eye" and could even hold the gaze of his pet lion. One of Fitzsimmons' opponents, Peter Maher, called Fitz "the devil in disguise," so unsettled was he by Fitzsimmons' demonic bearing.

Jack Sharkey was also known to disturb opponents with what the AP called his "frosty glare." Jack Dempsey defeated Sharkey in their 1927 bout, but even the Manassa Mauler admitted in his autobiography that Sharkey's scornful look "unnerved me."

The eyeballing between Dempsey and Sharkey began when they appeared together in New York for a contract signing. Dempsey held his own, offering what one reporter called "the fiercest conceivable glare from beneath a penthouse of frowning and beetle brows." But when they eventually entered the ring at Yankee Stadium, Dempsey's corner instructed him to look away from Sharkey. The United Press' coverage of the bout noted as much: "Sharkey, when he came into the ring, attempted to stare Dempsey down but Dempsey refused to look at him." Dempsey knew fights were won with punches, not by endless staring.

Dempsey had already been through the eyeball wars when he fought Georges Carpentier in 1921. The Frenchman's manager, Francois Deschamps, claimed a background as a hypnotist and bragged that his stare made Carpentier's opponents give up all hope. Again, Dempsey overcame the orb offensive and KO'd Carpentier in four.

Another renowned starer who worked his magic from outside the ring was Ben "Evil Eye" Finkle, a manager/trainer from St. Louis, Missouri. Stationed in the corners of many Depression-era stars, Finkle fixed his evil eye on fighters he wanted to see lose. Finkle said he began staring at fighters as a joke but noticed he had a startling success rate. Soon his evil eyes were in demand all over the country, as fight managers would hire him to work for their fighters and hex the opposition. Many labeled "The Eye" as nothing more than a con artist, but some believed Finkle's steely-eyed stare could cause great discomfort. In a 1938 AP article, Finkle credited his success to so many fighters being "superstitious."

Experts often disregarded the usefulness of the staredown. Some felt it was wrong to credit a fighter's success to his stare, that it trivialized other aspects of the sweet science. By the 1940s, the staredown was considered an old boxer's trick, and a cheap one at that, like stepping on an opponent's foot. There's probably a reason that staredowns became more noted in the 1950s when boxing became a staple of television. Let's face it, the staredown is partly showbiz.

Archie Moore's use of the staredown so impressed Red Smith that the popular New York columnist praised it in his coverage of Moore's win over Olson in 1955. Smith observed that when referee Ruby Goldstein "called the fighters together for instructions, Moore didn't listen. He fixed Olson with a menacing, unwinking stare that never wavered, holding this

"It's like looking at a pair of waxworks at Madame Tussauds."

Tyson Fury tried to unnerve Oleksandr Usyk, but staring wasn't enough.

Hopkins: John Gichigi; Fury: Mark Robinson

evil-eye attitude at least two minutes." Moore went on to score a knockout at 1:19 of Round 3, flattening Olson with a double left hook. Had Moore's stare softened Olson up? Or had Olson's 15-minute encounter with Gavilan taken too much out of him?

Moore, of course, knew every tactic of psychological warfare and even invented a few, so he undoubtedly understood the effectiveness of a good, mean stare. He glared at opponents, in the words of Budd Schulberg, "like some South Sea emperor staring down an unruly subject." Moore's staring technique had a particular impact on a fighter he trained for a while: George Foreman.

"Archie had taught me that if you could get your man to turn away first in the staring contest, then you'd won the fight," Foreman wrote in his memoir. Foreman also explained Moore's method. "You look at him right in his eyes," Moore had said. "You look right there until you find yourself in his eyes."

Under Moore's tutelage, Foreman developed his own ice-cold gaze. Norman Mailer once described Foreman's stare as "A big look, heavy as death, oppressive as the closing of the door of one's tomb." Yet Foreman admitted the stare was sometimes a way to mask his own nerves. As he stared down at Joe Frazier just before their 1973 meeting in Jamaica, Foreman hoped to keep Frazier's eyes locked on his own, otherwise Smokin' Joe might look down and notice George's knees were shaking.

Nerves and the staredown went hand in hand for another of boxing's great intimidators. Mike Tyson once said that he was usually nervous as he made his way to the ring, but he could calm himself by staring at his opponent. In a way, through intense eye contact, he'd transfer his own insecurities onto his rival. "I keep my eyes on him," Tyson said in James Toback's 2008 documentary. "Then once I see a chink in his armor, boom! One of his eyes made a move, and then I know I have him. And then he comes to the center of the ring, he still looks at me with his piercing look, as if he's not afraid, but he already made that mistake when he looked down for that one tenth of a second."

Perhaps Tyson's most galvanizing staredown was in his first post-prison bout against handpicked journeyman Peter McNeeley. During the instructions, as the amiable McNeeley rocked from side to side, Tyson followed him with his eyes, looking very much like a hungry cat staring at a bird. Cameras caught the chilling moment. Yet as the years passed and Tyson's career ebbed, his staredowns dissolved into buffoonery, especially on podiums. It was as if Tyson knew his stare was no longer enough, and he had to resort to nutty behavior.

When challenged with describing the stare of Sonny Liston, sportswriters of the early 1960s brought the word "baleful" into the American vernacular. Liston's ominous look said that his opponent's fate was already decided. Liston's gaze seemed unbeatable, that is, until he lost a couple of fights to Muhammad Ali. The vaunted Liston stare, apparently, had stopped working.

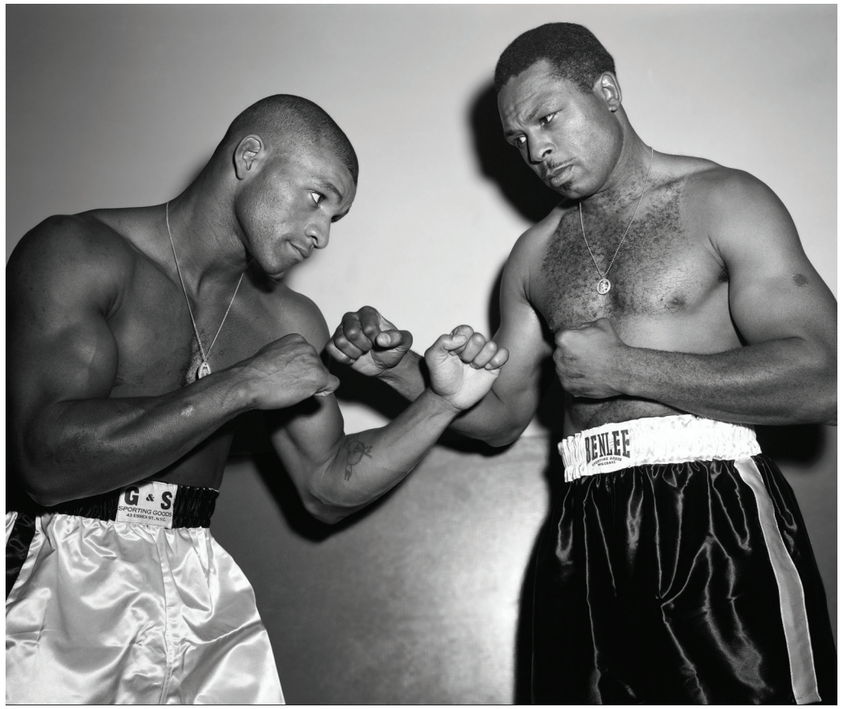
"You look right there until you find yourself in his eyes."

Ali later admitted that Liston made him uneasy, but his way of countering the stare was to lean in and make faces or talk a little trash. Years later when confronted by Foreman's stare in Africa, Ali again shut down the eyeballing game. "You've been following me since you were a little boy," Ali said during the instructions as Foreman tried to intimidate him. "Now you must meet me, your master!" Ali's talking game was better than Liston or Foreman's staring game. (Ali had a pretty good stare of his own, though it was almost always accompanied by talking.)

A remarkable staredown took place in November 1979 involving Sugar Ray Leonard and Wilfred Benitez moments before their welterweight title bout. Though the staredown with Benitez became part of Leonard's legend, he played it down at the time. "That wasn't anything," he said. "It was just for TV." But when Leonard recalled the moment in his autobiography, he wrote that Benitez caught him off guard. Leonard immediately thought back to similar staredowns from his youth. According to him, standoffs in his old Palmer Park, Maryland, neighborhood could last as long as 30 or 40 minutes before someone threw a punch. Leonard wrote that Benitez got the best of the stare-off, and that he'd needed a few seconds to shake off the effect of Benitez' eyes drilling into him. Leonard went on to win the bout by TKO in the 15th.

Leonard enjoyed gamesmanship. He admitted that he liked to throw an intimidating stare at opponents right before a fight as a sort of "last-ditch psych job." One of the rare times he didn't was his 1987 bout with Marvelous Marvin Hagler. He'd already played his share of mind games in the weeks before the bout, but when it came time for the pre-fight instructions, Leonard avoided Hagler's eyes. "I looked down at the canvas, not at Hagler," he wrote. "I was in my zone and did not want to be disturbed." Leonard won a 12-round split decision, showing that staredowns were hardly necessary. Of course, there was no sense in trying to outstare Hagler, a point already proven by Thomas Hearns.

Few fighters packed a deadlier gaze than Hearns, whose grim stare befitted his nickname of "Hitman." From the earliest days of his career, he'd practiced the ancient art of staring holes into an opponent. "His eyes are so intense," said his trainer, Emanuel Steward, "like a flame." Hearns worked the old ploy of making an opponent turn away first.



But when he met Hagler mid-ring on the memorable night of April 15, 1985, Hearns' oft-used glower amounted to nothing. Not that Hearns didn't try. "It was a wonderful stare," wrote Joe Hamelin for the McClatchy News Service. "There was pure malevolence in it."

Hamelin went on to describe Hearns ogling Hagler during the referee's instructions, how he "locked eyes with Hagler as if hoping to turn him to stone. Hearns is a Satanic-looking cuss to begin with, with those unsettling eyes and the facial hair that encircles his mouth. And he wore a red robe and a practiced leer that heightened the effect." The stare, along with his powerful right hand, failed Hearns that night. Hagler stopped him in three.

Britain's David Haye had some memorable staredowns with Nicolai Valuev and Wladimir Klitschko, but when he failed to keep a straight face in a 2008 face-off with Enzo Maccarinelli, he dismissed the importance of the stare.

Archie Moore (right) and his wilting gaze beat Harold Johnson four times.

"So what if you can stand with someone and look into their eyes without blinking," Haye said. "It's not going to stop you getting brutally knocked out the next day." Indeed, Haye KO'd Enzo the next day.

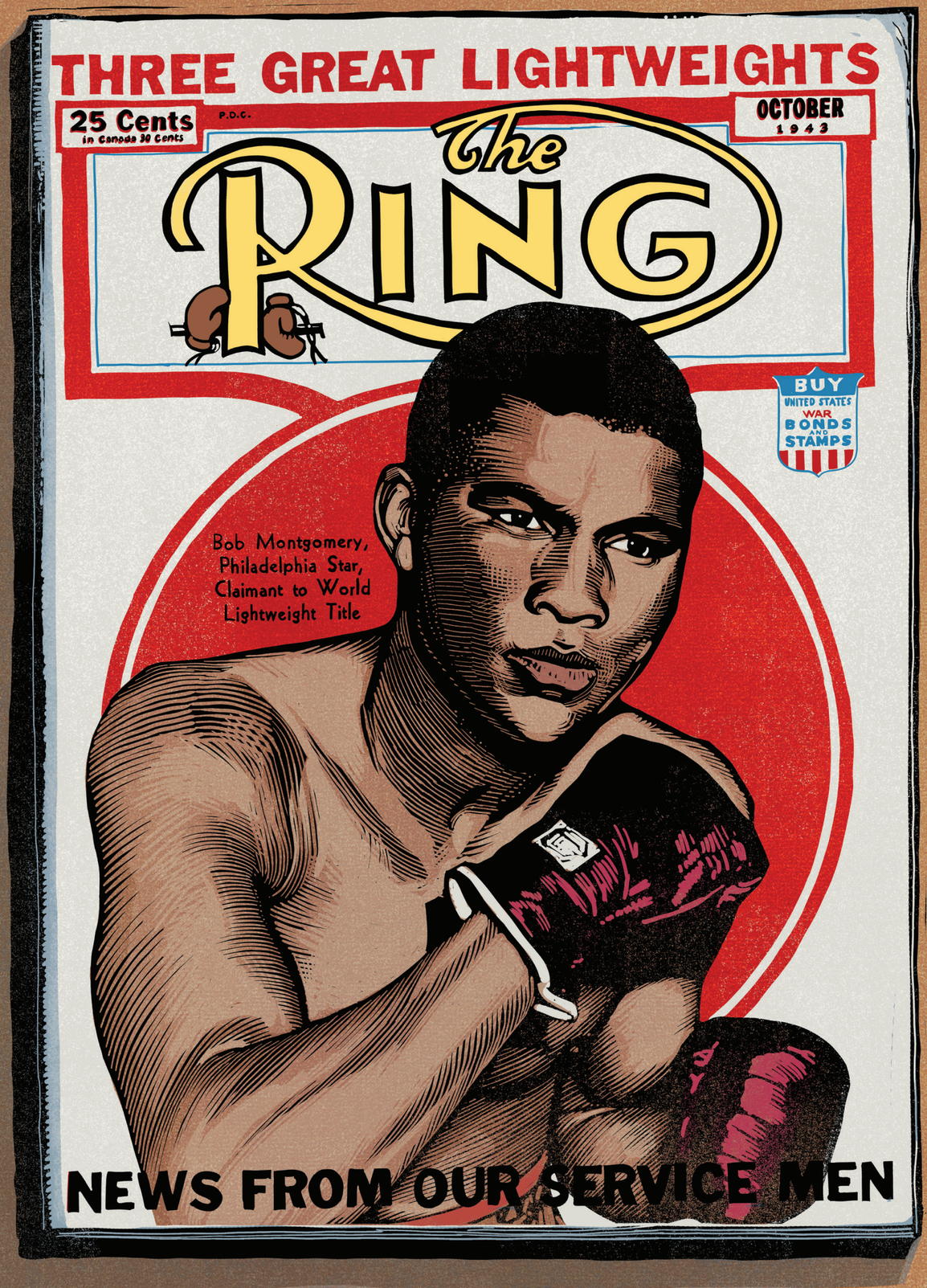
Nowadays, every press conference and weigh-in ends with a staged moment where the fighters stand eye-to-eye for an extended photoshoot. It's become predictable, even with the occasional shoving matches that break out. Indeed, if you've seen one, you've seen 'em all, though Chris Eubank Jr. smacking Conor Benn with an egg before their recent fight was an interesting touch.

While the present-day press conference staredown is just a way to create some content for social media, the in-ring staredown may still offer a legit way to get into your opponent's head or see the fear in their eyes. Dr. Adam Gallenberg of Premier Sport Psychology of Minnesota has worked with many fighters and appreciates the importance of a staredown.

"At first glance," Dr. Gallenberg told The Ring, a staredown "might seem like it's for the camera, and sometimes it is. However, under the surface, these moments can absolutely impact the fighter's confidence." Gallenberg will sometimes meet with a fighter after a podium staredown and use "mental imagery techniques to simulate the fight plan." This is effective, Gallenberg believes, since a fighter who has stared deeply into a rival's eyes can create a more vivid mental image of how a fight might play out.

"Although the experience is different from fighter to fighter," Gallenberg said, "I've often helped athletes recognize when they are being baited emotionally." Overall, Gallenberg helps fighters "project confident body language" during staredowns, gives them tips on how to not be intimidated by trash talk and flashing cameras, and to manage their reactions in "pressure situations."

What would Evil Eye Finkle think of such modern methods? Finkle claimed his special talent was "a gift" that couldn't be taught. Finkle also claimed his stare was potent enough to change the course of history. He recalled late in life that the U.S. Army wanted to use his abilities in World War II against the Axis powers. He was never close enough to cast a spell on the bad guys, but he suspected he had done his part for the Allies. "They just shipped me to Paris, where I put the evil eye to work long distance on Hitler, and two weeks later the bum blew his brains away," Finkle said. "I shoulda got a medal."



THE BOBCAT

BOB MONTGOMERY

AND THE GOLDEN AGE OF BOXING

By Nigel Collins

After watching the fights at the Blue Horizon, I got in my car and drove south on Broad Street, heading to Center City. I hadn't gone far when I noticed an elderly man walking on the sidewalk going in the same direction. Despite having his back to me, I knew who he was. I slowed down, pulled over to the side of the road and lowered the window.

"Hey, champ, want a ride home?"

Two-time former lightweight champion Bob Montgomery turned, smiled, opened the door and settled into the passenger seat.

"Thanks."

We chatted most of the way, and when we got to Pine Street, he said, "You can let me off here."

The last time I saw Montgomery was in 1989 at Dyce Reilly's Irish Pub, a cozy luncheon spot patronized by Philadelphia businessmen. He was sitting on a barstool, wearing a snazzy brown velvet outfit and matching hat. I didn't approach him because I knew why he was there. Bob was taking numbers for the street lottery, and I was making sure that what I had been told was true. Bob gave me the side-eye, and in less than a second I was out the door.

I loved the way he was still hustling, still self-sufficient, still feeling like the champ somewhere inside. He was a survivor of what many consider the "Golden Age" of boxing, the 1930s and '40s. It was a time when boxers fought as often as possible. The pay was pitiful, but it was better than nothing.

Montgomery's busiest year was 1939, when he fought 19 times. Boxers back then were a different breed. I'm not saying they were better compared to today's lot or vice versa, but the entertainment quotient was heavily in favor of the period in which Montgomery fought. Back then, there were so many boxers, so much happening, it wasn't unusual to see a good fight. It was expected.

Today, not so much. Waiting doesn't heighten the anticipation; it makes people forget there is a fight. In the Golden Age you couldn't forget. The newspapers and radio were all over the sport. There were always fights the fans wanted to see, and, by gum, they usually got what they wanted. And quickly, too.

Yes, mobsters were deeply involved in the fight racket, and if anyone was going to get screwed, it was usually the boxers. Gangsters such as Frankie Carbo, Blinky Palermo and Felix Bocchicchio were omnipresent and dangerous.

And yet!

Many of the fights and fighters were magnificent. Have you ever thought that, despite their countless sins, the villains must have known something about running the sport?

A few days prior to the sighting at Dyce Reilly's, I had interviewed Montgomery at promoter J Russell Peltz's office in Philadelphia's Museum District. Bob had been retired from the ring for approximately 35 years when the interview took place.

He wasn't a lightweight anymore, but so what? Bob didn't have to worry about stepping on the scales. His days of making weight were history. He was a chubby, jovial man who laughed easily and was always delighted to talk about his boxing career. Sitting in Peltz's office, surrounded by boxing ephemera, Montgomery was relaxed, maybe even thinking back to his glory days.

He had an astonishing memory, especially for a man who had fought 97 professional boxing matches. He remembered the date of every bout, the opponent, the venue, the result and the purse – especially the purse. It seemed like a trick at first, but Bob was for real, a beer-washed phenom, a mnemonist without portfolio.

In 1935, Montgomery followed his older brother Tom to Philadelphia. Bob was just 15 when he left the family farm in Sumter, South Carolina, and hitchhiked 582 miles to Philly. The brothers were part of the Great Black Migration (1917-1970) traveling north in search of work and a better life. The Migration served as a northbound pipeline for southern boxers, as it did for a multitude of other strivers.

Montgomery was born February 10, 1919, and spent his formative years in a segregated state but nevertheless spoke affectionately of his boyhood.

"It was nice down there," said Bob. "It was me, my brother Tom and seven

Illustration by Chris Wormell

Bettmann

Montgomery in training for a 1947 rematch with Ike Williams.

sisters. Everything was segregated then. You could not go certain places. But at worst, people had their own. We played baseball. Went to church. I went to school a little bit, not too much. It was a tiny schoolhouse in the woods."

Growing up on a farm, Montgomery knew all about hard work and would find more of the same in Philly. First as a construction laborer and then a puller at the Apex Laundry. He worked from three o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the afternoon, earning 25 cents an hour. But a change was gonna come in the form of Johnny Hutchinson, a boxer who lived in the same neighborhood as Montgomery. Hutchinson convinced Bob to come with him to Johnny Madison's gym, aka the Slaughterhouse.

"It was tough down there at the Slaughterhouse," said Montgomery. "You couldn't train in a white gym, so all the black boxers were there. Ray Robinson came down there to box."

Montgomery entered the paid ranks on October 13, 1938, at Waltz Dream Arena in Atlantic City. The promoter was Joe Miller, a local hustler and blackjack dealer at Babbette's. Montgomery stopped Young Johnny Buff in two rounds.

"Know what I got for my first pro fight?" said Bob. "Twenty-five dollars. Know what I got? I got half of twenty-five dollars. Twelve and a half. But I made a big hit, and Miller said, 'Can you come back next week?' And I said sure. He gave me five dollars more. Five dollars in 1938 was five dollars. I went back there and fought Pat Patucci. Knocked him out in Round 2."

Montgomery was undefeated in his first 23 pro fights (22-0-1, 14 KOs), 14 of them at Waltz Dream arena. At the time, fighting down the Jersey Shore was like being in an Off-Broadway play, but thanks to his exhilarating fighting style, Montgomery was closing in on the big time. He even acquired a nickname.

"Johnny Webster of the Philadelphia Inquirer was a good friend of mine, and he called me the 'Bobcat' because I was a guy who just kept coming forward," said Montgomery. "I was like a cat. I just kept pawing and pawing at the other guy until I got him.

"A lot of people said I fought dirty. People still say it. I know it's something I'll carry to my grave. But I didn't fight dirty unless a guy made me fight dirty. I didn't cry. I didn't care what no fighters did to me, because I was going to get him, make him cry, make him sorry for what did to me."

Said Joe Gramby, Montgomery's trainer who eventually became Philly's most influential black manager: "Bob was always an all-right guy outside, but when he'd got in that ring, it was him or you. Bob was a pretty mean guy. Vicious.

"I always thought Bob would be a champion," said Gramby. "When I showed him something, he picked it up in a minute and made it look smooth."

On March 16, 1939, in his eleventh pro fight, Montgomery solidified his reputation as a badass. In the other corner was Frankie Saia, a 78-fight veteran, with 62 of those fights victories. The customers at the Philadelphia Olympic A.C. couldn't have asked for more. It was a lightweight version of King Kong vs. Tyrannosaurus Rex.

"Frankie Saia. Yeah, tough fighter," said Montgomery, looking like he hadn't thought about Saia and the humdinger they shared in a long time. "I knocked him out in the fourth round, but he had me down two times in the first round. You know what I got for that fight? Forty dollars!"

The Cambria was a venue known as the "Bucket of Blood," located in a blue-collar, all-white neighborhood. Montgomery suffered his first pro loss there against Tommy Spiegal, a highly controversial 10-round unanimous verdict.

"I won the fight, no doubt about it," said Montgomery. "But they gave it to him. You know how the Cambria was back then. Matt Adgie was the referee. He was a thief. I know he was a thief, so they took the fight away from me."

Gramby backed that up: "The Cambria was a blood pit. Name-calling and all that. Speigal didn't really beat Bob, but if he hadn't got the decision, we might have been lynched."

There was, however, an upside to the defeat. Promoter Herman Taylor, the most powerful man in Philadelphia boxing and a future inductee to the International Boxing Hall of Fame, took a personal interest in Montgomery. He promoted three of Bob's four fights against Al Nettlow, a well-schooled, nimble boxer whose punches couldn't bruise a peach. Montgomery took the series 3-0-1.

During those years, in Philadelphia at least, the black media members were situated in a different section than the white press. Obviously, this was racist bullshit, so Montgomery and Gramby went to see Taylor. Who knows what took place behind closed doors, but the important thing was that Taylor agreed. From then on, black writers and photographers worked side by side with their white colleagues.

"It was all Bob," said Gramby

When asked about the "Sweetwater Swatter," Bob tilted his head back slightly and rolled his eyes.

"Lew Jenkins. Oooooh! He was one of the best punchers I ever fought. Maybe the best puncher I've fought," said Montgomery.

Jenkins won their first match by unanimous decision, September 16, 1940, at Shibe Park, at one time the home of the Phillies. "You know, I had him down in the third round. But they gave him the fight. Everybody knew I won except for the two judges and the referee. When we fought again in Madison Square Garden [May 16, 1941], I did such a job on him they couldn't take that one away from me."

In his biography of Jenkins, *From Boxing Ring to Battlefield: The Life of War Hero Lew Jenkins*, Gene Pantalone wrote, "Montgomery had beaten Lew so severely, Fred Browning [a wealthy sportsman and gambler] said he needed plastic surgery to repair the damage to his face. A deep cut across the bridge of his nose would require a skin graft."

It seems Gramby and co-manager Frankie Thomas had a reasonable business relationship with Blinky Palermo. Reasonable enough for Blinky to ask Gramby for a favor.

"Bob was fighting Mayon Padlo, and I made a deal with Blinky for Bob to carry Padlo," said Gramby. "But I also told him if Padlo would not fight and the crowd started booing, Bob would have to knock him out. Blinky said, 'OK.' So, when the crowd started to boo, Bob turned on the heat and knocked him out."

One boxer who always gave Montgomery a difficult time was Sammy "The Clutch" Angott. The nickname stemmed from Angott's infuriating habit of landing a clean punch and immediately grabbing his opponent.

Montgomery was all about getting it on, doing damage. He fought Angott three times, once in 1940 and twice in 1942. Angott won all three via decision, one by majority, one split and the other unanimous.

On October 6, 1942, Montgomery lost a 10-round majority decision to Maxie Shapiro at the Philadelphia Arena, on a night Bob should not have been in the ring.

"Bob had his tonsils taken out about three months before the first Shapiro fight," said Gramby. "But what we didn't know was that the doctor had taken out half of them. When Bob began moving around in the dressing room to loosen up, he started to vomit. There was nothing you could do. We didn't want to stick the promoter, so Bob fought anyway. He was game until the end, but Shapiro boxed him all over the ring that night."

Two months later, back at the Arena, they fought a rematch. Bob had completely recovered from his bungled tonsillectomy and scored a 10-round unanimous decision over Shapiro.

The victory over Shapiro was

"Bob was always an all-right guy outside, but when he'd got in that ring, it was him or you."

the first of six consecutive victories, a winning streak that led the Bobcat to a bout with Beau Jack, the New York State Athletic Commission lightweight champ. The super-popular Jack had won the vacant title with a third-round knockout of Tippy Larkin.

Despite other fighters' claims to the title, the NYSAC champs were usually considered the legitimate world champions. That's how much power Madison Square Garden wielded.

There was a capacity crowd of 18,343 at the Garden the night of May 21, 1943, to watch a pair of future Hall of Famers do their thing. Jack was a 13-5 betting favorite and got off to a good start.

"Jack, from the first second, sailed into his opponent and flailed away with a right uppercut that Montgomery couldn't evade," wrote Joseph C. Nichols in The New York Times.

"Bob got down on the back foot and threw a right hand. Bang! Beau shook like a leaf," said Gramby. "That was the turning point of the fight. It was one of the best rounds I've ever seen."

By time the match was over, Nichols changed his mind, writing, "Before announcer Harry Balogh was able to inform the crowd of the outcome, everybody in the house, particularly Montgomery, knew the lightweight division had a new champion."

The Bobcat didn't complain about his purse of $14,033, which today would be approximately $296,953. Goodness knows how it was carved up.

"I'll never forget that night," said Montgomery. "It was the greatest feeling I ever had. They had a party for me afterwards, but I couldn't make it. Both of my eyes were swollen closed. I took me a hot bath with some Epsom salts and went to bed."

Two days after winning the 135-pound title, Bob went back to work at the Sun Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, where he was a blacksmith's helper. World War II was raging, and every able-bodied man had to join the armed forces or work at a defense-related job.

When asked if he did any hard work at the shipyard, Bob replied, "We'll just leave that alone," and chuckled.

Montgomery was contractually obligated to give Jack a rematch, but as was the custom in those days, champions usually fought non-title bouts between defending the belt. The first of Bob's four non-title paydays was an easy sixth-round knockout of Al Reasoner at Pelican Stadium in New Orleans, July 4, 1943. The Big Easy, however, did not provide anything in the way of southern hospitality.

"At that time, in New Orleans, blacks were only allowed to fight blacks," said Montgomery. "My manager, Frankie Thomas, stayed somewhere over in the white section. I only saw Frankie at the gym. I had to stay at the Northside, a black hotel. It wasn't a hotel really. It was just a place to sleep. But I didn't let it bother me. You had no choice. You had to accept it."

The other three non-title bouts were unanimous decisions over Frankie Willis and Fritzie Zivic and a sixth-round TKO of Petey Scalzo, October 25, 1943, less than a month before the second Beau Jack fight, November 19, 1943.

According to the Associated Press, "Beau regained the 135-pound title by outpointing Bob Montgomery in a furious 15-rounder at Madison Square Garden ... Montgomery put on a whirlwind finish in the last five rounds. In the last two rounds, especially, Montgomery seemed to be on the verge of a knockout triumph, but somehow Beau stood up to cart off a unanimous decision."

"I didn't feel too bad when I lost," said Bob. "I was young and had a return contract to fight him again. I knew I would win it back."

Trenton, New Jersey, prospect Ike Williams (a future Hall of Famer) was inconsistent at first, but starting with a six-round decision over Vince Delia on November 3, 1941, he put together a 34-fight unbeaten streak. One of his victims was Montgomery's friend Johnny Hutchinson, the neighbor who persuaded Bob to become a boxer.

Hutchinson's best days were past, and Williams gave him a spiteful beatdown on November 8, 1943, at the Philadelphia Arena. Hutchinson was knocked down three times in the first round and once more in the second by a punch to the heart that knocked him out.

Bob was pissed about the beating Williams gave Hutchinson and vowed to give Ike an even worse thrashing when they met on January 25, 1944, at Philadelphia's Convention Hall. The grudge match attracted 14,602 paying customers, which must have warmed the cockles of Herman Taylor's heart.

The Bobcat dominated virtually every round, unrelentingly attacking Williams' body, taking his legs and siphoning his gas tank. It was Montgomery at his barbaric best.

"Fans were screaming 'Stop the fight ... Stop it ... He'll kill him,'" wrote the Philadelphia Inquirer's John Webster. "Some said Montgomery was washed up, had lost his punch, but he didn't show it as he prepared the *coup de grace*. He never looked better as a finisher as he did in liquidating the lurching Ike.

"Virtually defenseless, Williams was struck by a long right to the jaw. He pitched forward, as points of his body raced for the floor, and his head easily arrived first to dangle over the ring apron, his long, thin body bringing the lowest ring rope down to the canvas."

All told, Bob knocked Williams down three times in the 12th and final round. After Ike's third trip to the canvas, referee Ernie Sesto counted him out at the 2:49 mark.

Just like in a corny B-movie, after the fight was over, Bob hollered, "I got him for you, Hutch."

Less than a month later, it was Montgomery's turn to get knocked out. Cold. Brooklyn's Al "Bummy" Davis unleashed his heavy artillery in the first round, knocked Montgomery down and stopped him in 63 seconds. At the time, it was the fastest knockout in a main event since MSG opened in 1925.

"I just got hit," said Montgomery. "But I shouldn't have fought the guy in the first case. Of course, it wasn't me who took the fight; it was the people around me."

Fortunately, the loss didn't interfere with Bob's upcoming rematch with Jack. Back then, fans were more concerned about the quality of the fights, not records. A good fight was a good fight, and Jack and the Bobcat could not have a bad fight if they tried. Just two weeks after his loss to "Bummy" Davis, the Bobcat was back in the ring for his third match with Jack. Despite Montgomery's instantaneous knockout loss to Davis, 19,066 fans turned up at Madison Square Garden, the venue's largest indoor crowd of the season.

"They had a party for me afterwards, but I couldn't make it. Both of my eyes were swollen closed."

The rubber match was another thriller, a rip-snorting, give-and-take rumble. Montgomery built an early lead, and Jack frantically rallied in rounds 10, 11 and 12. Then Bobcat came back in the final two rounds, landing fierce blows to the body.

"To most observers, there was no question about Montgomery's triumph," wrote Joseph C. Nichols in The New York Times. "Yet when announcer George Kobb declared judge Marty Monroe had voted for Jack, 8 rounds to 7, that resulted in hoots of disagreement with Monroe's card. The crowd became still when informed that judge Billy Healy had decided in Montgomery's favor, 8 to 6 with one round even, and when referee Young Otto's ballot read the same as Healy's was made public, the house roared with approval."

The United States entered World War II on December 8, 1941, the day after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Shortly after regaining the lightweight title from Jack, Montgomery entered the U.S. Army and was stationed at Kiester Field in Mississippi.

"Kiester Field was all right, but if you wanted to go to town, you had to go to Biloxi," said Montgomery. "Everything was segregated. Everything. Bars. Hotels. You couldn't hardly go to a grocery store unless you went to a black grocery store. I only went to town once the whole time I was there. You didn't even have a place you could go to the bathroom. You had to go out in the backyard."

Back in New York City, promoter Mike Jacobs had a brainstorm. To raise money for the war effort, he would match Montgomery and Jack in a fourth

fight and give the proceeds to the government. Instead of tickets, Jacobs sold War Bonds, resulting in the largest gate in boxing history at that time, a colossal $36 million.

Like their first three bouts, Jack and Montgomery gave the 15,822 patrons at Madison Square Garden a highly entertaining fight. According to The New York Times. "Jack, revealing the ceaseless aggressiveness that always characterizes his ringwork, won the decision in an encounter that was hard-fought through every one of the 10 rounds."

As it was a non-title fight, Montgomery retained his piece of the lightweight title. The only money either boxer received was $1,500 for training expenses. Years later, when Bob was having financial difficulties, the Army repeatedly refused to help.

Montgomery had four more fights before being discharged from the Army in November 1945. He won three of them and reversed the loss to Nick Moran.

"Bob was never the same fighter after he came out of the Army," said Gramby.

It is hard to argue with Gramby's critique, but it was a matter of degrees. The greatness was gone, but Bob was still a very good fighter, still a man who believed in himself. Moreover, there was money to be made, and the first move was to defend his title at Madison Square Garden, June 28, 1946. Longtime lightweight contender Allie Stolz was a perfect challenger – good but not good enough. The Bobcat knocked him out in the 13th round.

Philadelphian Wesley Mouzon was a teenage sensation, so promoter Taylor knew there would be a handsome gate if he matched him with Montgomery on August 19, 1946, at Shibe Park in a non-title bout.

"Tall, angular Wesley Mouzon was popularly regarded as a foolhardy boy attempting a man's errand, last night qualified for a championship engagement when he blasted out Bob Montgomery, rangy boss of the lightweights, to a knockout defeat in an amazing second round of their mill, listed for 12 periods," wrote John Webster.

Mouzon's astonishing upset victory made a rematch with the title on the line a no-brainer and was arranged for November 26 at Convention Hall. Many pundits believed Mouzon would beat Montgomery again, and the challenger was a slight favorite. What most people didn't know was that Mouzon had suffered a detached retina while sparring for the rematch. He and his team decided to go ahead with the fight anyway. They knew he would probably never fight again, and Mouzon needed the money.

Montgomery and his handlers claimed they were unaware of the injury until the fight was over. Who knows whether they were telling the truth, but from a boxing point of view, it doesn't matter. The 12,416 fans were in the dark, and many expected the fight to produce a new champion.

Mouzon boxed well the first few rounds, but Montgomery was usually a slow starter. As was often the case, Bob unleashed a determined body assault, ending the match with a ruinous left hook to the head in the eighth round.

"Mouzon, bleeding from his left eyebrow, nose and mouth, fell face downward against the lower rope, and turning, sought vainly to push himself upright but was counted out at 2:18 of the eighth round by referee Charley Daggert," wrote Webster.

Montgomery's knockout of Mouzon was his final great performance, his swan song.

Mouzon never fought again but became one of Philly's best trainers until his death in July 2003 at the age of 75. Among the boxers he trained were Dwight Muhammad Qawi, Buster Drayton and Tony "The Punching Postman" Thornton. Whether it was at the gym or at the fights, I always enjoyed speaking with Wesley. He was an intelligent, upbeat person and a true gentleman.

Montgomery's knockout of Mouzon was his final great performance, his swan song. He won six of his next seven fights and then put the title on the line against Ike Williams. They fought on August 4, 1947, in front of 39,501 fans at Philadelphia's Municipal Stadium.

Williams knocked Montgomery down in the sixth round. Bob beat the count but was helpless under Williams' follow-up barrage, and referee Charley Daggert stopped the fight at the 2:37 mark of the round.

"I thought I was going to win the second Williams fight," said Montgomery. "I was winning until I got knocked out, but I just didn't have it no more. I thought I did, but I didn't."

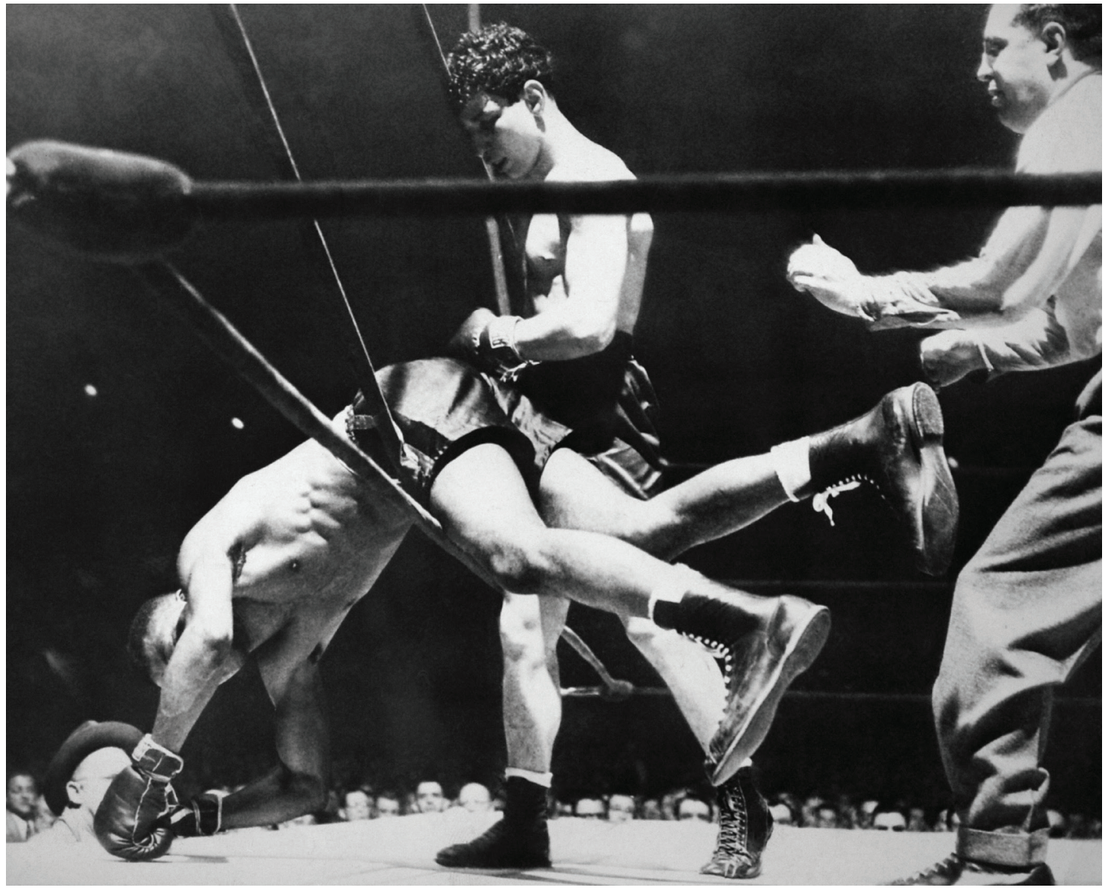
Bob's $47,000 purse was the highest of his career, the equivalent of $689,927 today. Who got what and how much is unclear.

An interesting sidenote: Future light heavyweight champion Harold Johnson outpointed Al Pinel in a six-round preliminary on the undercard of the Montgomery-Williams rematch.

Montgomery was correct when he said he didn't have it anymore. He fought six more times after losing the title to Williams and lost all six. His last fight was a unanimous 10-round decision loss to Eddie Giosa on March 27, 1950.

"When Giosa licked me, I knew it was time to quit," said Montgomery. "I figured if this guy can beat me, it didn't make sense to fight no more."

The Bobcat's overall pro record was 75-19-3 with 37 knockouts. Seven of his losses came in his last seven fights. Montgomery was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1995.



Keystone-France

Down but not out, Montgomery rallied to outpoint Tony Pellone at Madison Square Garden in 1946.

"Oh yeah, I had money when I quit," said Bob. "I had apartment houses at 21st and Berks, 1850 Camac Street, 1640 York Street, and then I had my home at 2447 North 17th Street. I also had a poolroom. I owned them all outright. But I lost everything. I started gambling, backing numbers and everything. I just spent money, that's all, just spent money. But I still survive. Still survive."

Starting in 1958, Montgomery was a salesman for various beer companies, representing Pabst Blue Ribbon, Ballantine and Carling Black Label. As someone who loved to drink beer, Bob was the right man for the job. In 1973, he worked for the city as part of "gang control" and for 10 years tried to stop teenage violence.

He was married and divorced three times and told me during our conversation in 1989 that he was particularly proud of his son, Bob Montgomery Jr.: "I sent him to Bluefield State College in West Virginia. I told him, 'You can't fight. You go to school.' He graduated in 1966 and now works at a youth study center in Philadelphia. He's a very smart guy. I'm the only dummy in the family.

"I'm the luckiest guy in the world. The Lord is on my side. I have a pretty decent life. I don't need nothing. I've got my health. I have money in my pocket. I've got clothes I'll never wear out. I drink beer every day. Look at other fighters and see how they got messed up. How about Muhammad Ali? He can't even talk."

When asked what he missed the most about his championship days, Bob grinned, leaned close and whispered: "The broads." RING

EPILOGUE: Bob Montgomery died August 8, 1998, at the age of 79, from complications of a stroke. He is buried in Indiantown Gap National Cemetery in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania.

MIRACLE MATTHEW BURNS LOPEZ IN LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT HELL

By Randy Gordon

Editor's Note: The following is the original fight report for Matthew Saad Muhammad's Ring Magazine/WBC light heavyweight championship triumph over Mexico's Yaqui Lopez, which took place on July 13, 1980. The report appeared in the October 1980 issue of The Ring. • The Muhammad-Lopez bout would later be named The Ring Fight of the Year for 1980, beating out Roberto Duran's all-time great points victory over Sugar Ray Leonard in their unforgettable 15-round welterweight epic, "The Brawl in Montreal."

MCAFEE, N.J. – In one of the greatest fights a reporter could ever hope to cover, in one of the most spectacular fights a fan could ever dream of watching, Matthew Saad Muhammad retained his world light heavyweight title for the fourth time, stopping fired-up challenger Alvaro "Yaqui" Lopez in 2:03 of the 14th round after flooring him a total of four times during that round.

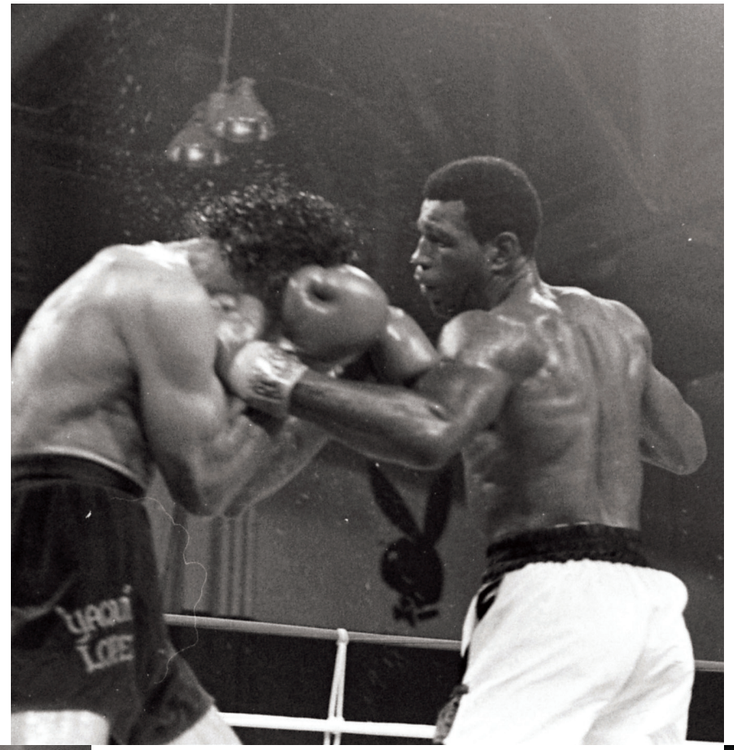
It was a dramatic ending to what had been a dramatic, see-saw, punch-filled, glorious fight at the Great Gorge Playboy Club.

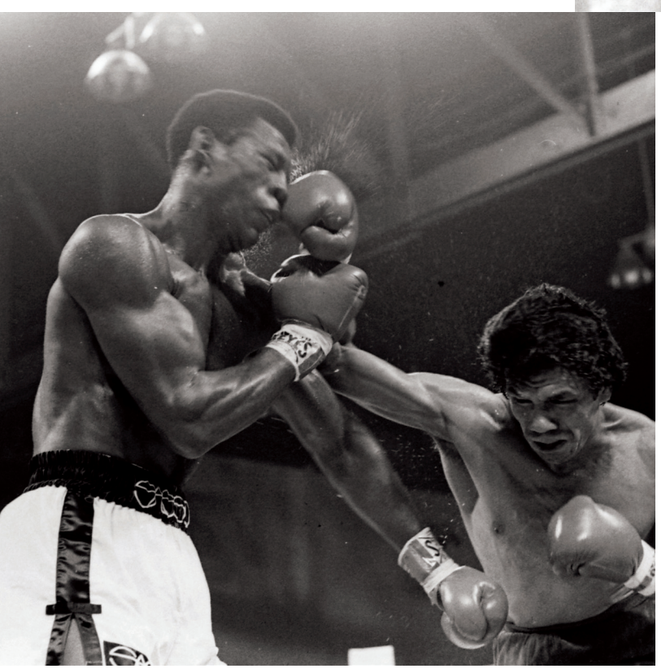
Lopez, 174¾, trained for a rough fight. He came to Great Gorge to take away Muhammad's title. To decision him. To knock him out. To cut him up. To win the title.

Muhammad, 174¼, trained for his fight with an intensity he had never shown before – remarkable for a man who pushes himself in training all the time. It was as if he knew the fight would demand the best effort he ever gave, despite the fact he had stopped the same Lopez in October 1978.

For the first seven rounds, both fighters took turns punching the other around and being the aggressor. Early in the bout, Muhammad suffered a slight cut above his right eye. Lopez sustained a slice on the bridge of his nose in round three. Neither cut determined the outcome of the fight. Ferocity did.

The fierceness of the contest demanded three





minutes of action in every round by both contestants. Three minutes per round is what they gave. For the first seven rounds, fans – and even hardened reporters – applauded the action. Then, unbelievably, the fight became even more exciting.

Going into round eight, judge Paul Cavaliere had Lopez in the lead, 4-2-1. Judge Emile Brunette and referee Waldemar Schmidt had Lopez even more comfortably in the lead, 5-2. The Ring card had it 4-3 Lopez at that point.

Round eight must be written into the books as one of the most sensational, exciting rounds ever fought. Ever!

After being stung by a hook to the head early in the eighth, Lopez came back to nearly knock out the champion midway through the round, only to nearly get knocked out himself in the closing moments of the round.

Lopez hurt Muhammad with a hook flush on the chin and began to taste a world title in this, his fourth attempt to win one.

Despite the pleas from his corner to "draw back and box," Lopez, 28, unloaded both hands against Muhammad. A left. A right. A left. A right. Every one – nearly two dozen – crashed against the champion's jaw, the champion's head, the champion's face. The champion wavered. He staggered. He buckled. But the 26-year-old champion would not fall.

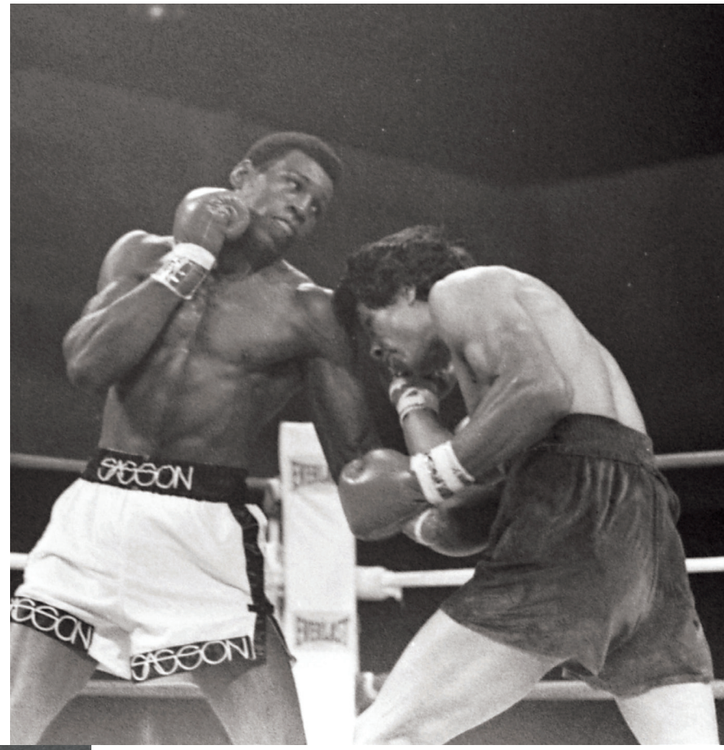
Not only did he remain on his feet, he came back punching with both hands to stagger and nearly drop the challenger. At the bell, the 1,300 fans in the Playboy Club Convention Center roared with the intensity of a crowd 10 times as large.

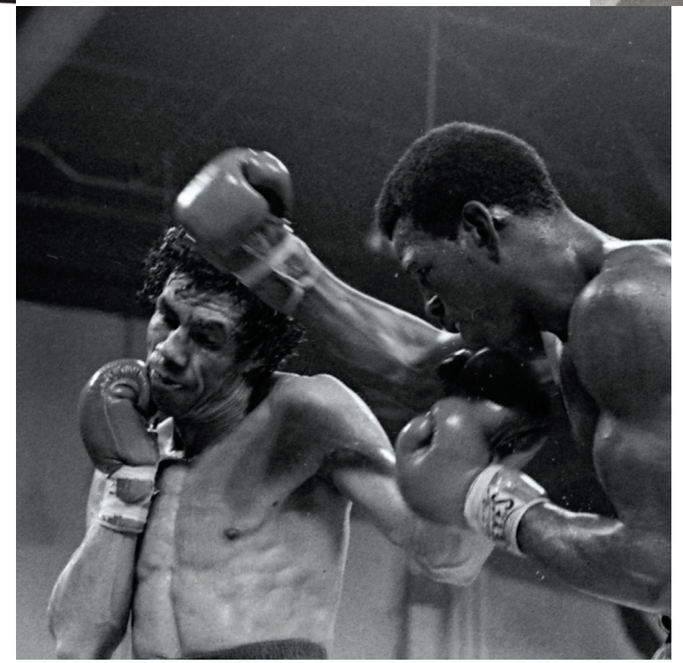
Round nine saw the action slow, but only in comparison to the incredible pace both fighters had set through the first eight rounds. Both men were tired. Both men were hurt. But it was Muhammad – not Lopez – who recovered from the viciousness of round eight. Lopez won the round. He won that individual battle, but he lost the war in doing so. Lopez had punched himself out. His zip was gone. So was his long-burning hope of finally winning a title.

Lopez fought hard, but against this gritty, determined champion, he needed more. Much more. Like a child's windup toy, Lopez began to move slower. His legs lost their bounce, his punches their snap. Muhammad began to land with more frequency.

Approximately midway through round 14, Lopez was rocked by an overhand right. A right uppercut then dropped him. He was up at eight but went down again moments later from another right.

Again Lopez was up at eight, and again he ran into a right that sent him to the canvas. Referee Schmidt watched Lopez closely as the veteran contender rose at three. As the fight resumed – the three-knockdown rule had been waived – Schmidt continued to watch





Lopez closely. Muhammad moved in. So did Schmidt. A sharp right to the chin dumped Lopez near the ropes. Again he rose, using the ropes to pull himself to his feet. But this time, Schmidt waved his arms. He had seen enough. The fight was over at 2:03.

Afterwards, Lopez said about the champion: "He is not a great fighter. He is a great puncher!"

When asked what happened in the eighth round, Lopez said, "I hit him (Muhammad) some good shots, but he just didn't go down. That's why he's champion."

Muhammad – who did not appear before the press for 90 minutes after the fight – admitted he was in trouble during that eighth round but "knew where I was." He said, "I knew I'd come back, and I did."

The victory upped the champion's record to 27-3-2. For Lopez, it was his 10th loss in 59 fights.

In New York's Gleason's Gym two days after the fight, Lopez put the championship bout in perspective better than anybody.

"It was a sensational fight," said the man who helped make it such. "You have no idea of how I wanted the title. But Saad Muhammad just wanted it more. It wasn't so much a case of me losing the fight as it was Saad Muhammad winning it." RING

FROM THE RING
TO THE ROAD
WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK

Shory.

Insurance. But good.

Licensed by the
Central Bank of
the UAE

FUNDAMENTALS

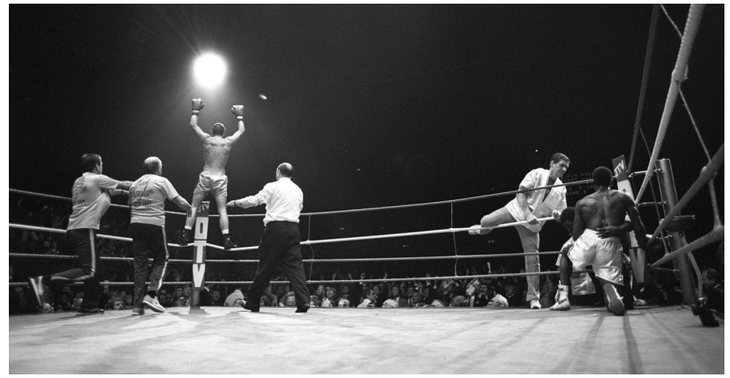
Essential tools for the boxing deep dive

By Ruth Raper

FORGOTTEN CLASSIC:

Mark Kaylor KO 8 Errol Christie

» November 5, 1985, Wembley Arena, London



PA Images

In the annals of British boxing, certain contests transcend the sport to become cultural touchstones. While the Benn-Eubank rivalry and Frank Bruno's heroic failures against Mike Tyson dominate collective memory, the explosive 1985 middleweight clash between Mark Kaylor and Errol Christie also deserves recognition as one of the U.K.'s most compelling classics.

Set against the backdrop of social unrest following the Broadwater Farm riots, this November encounter at Wembley Arena carried significance beyond mere sporting competition. Christie, the gifted amateur star who had captained England for three years, represented the new wave of Black British boxers. Kaylor, the gritty East Ender trained by Terry Lawless, embodied the traditional tough British boxer that fans were accustomed to seeing.

Their infamous pre-fight press conference, where whispered words sparked a brawl that required European middleweight champ Herol Graham's intervention to separate them, only intensified public interest. The animosity seemed genuine, the tension palpable. When they finally stepped between the ropes, expectations were high. Neither man would disappoint.

The opening round delivered immediate drama, with Christie tasting canvas within 30 seconds from a thunderous Kaylor right hand. Lesser men would have crumbled, but Christie rallied magnificently, dropping Kaylor with a chopping right before the bell. As fireworks literally exploded inside the arena, commentator Harry Carpenter's words, "a needle fight, a grudge fight, it's plain for all to see," captured the electric atmosphere perfectly. The contrasting styles created compelling theater: Christie, the slick boxer with an educated jab who had once impressed Emanuel Steward enough to don the famous Kronk colors; Kaylor, the rangier fighter who abandoned technical refinement to march relentlessly forward, absorbing punishment to deliver his own.

In Round 3, Kaylor was down again from another powerful right-hand shot. Christie's faster hands repeatedly found their target, but questions about his punch resistance, raised after his shocking first-round defeat to Jose Seys the previous year, reappeared as Kaylor weathered the storm and returned fire with punches that appeared to put a dent in Christie.

The middle rounds displayed boxing at its most visceral, the referee's blood-splattered shirt telling its own story, as Christie's superior technique battled Kaylor's indomitable will. The East Ender's strategy became clear: Absorb Christie's diminishing firepower, then overwhelm him with relentless pressure.

In the eighth, Kaylor's approach bore fruit. A devastating right hand sent Christie face-first to the canvas. Though the Coventry fighter bravely attempted to rise, he couldn't beat the count.

What followed revealed boxing's paradoxical beauty. The bitter animosity evaporated instantly as Kaylor pushed past his celebrating team to share private words with his defeated opponent. When Christie regained his feet, both men embraced and raised each other's hands, enemies transformed into brothers through shared combat.

Kaylor would go on to challenge for European titles while Christie's career never quite recovered. Their rivalry remains largely overlooked in British boxing folklore, overshadowed by later middleweight epics. Yet for those fortunate enough to witness it, Kaylor-Christie represented British boxing at its purest: two men from different worlds settling their differences the only way they knew how, and finding mutual respect in the process. In an era of manufactured rivalries and sanitized confrontations, this forgotten classic deserves rediscovery and celebration. »

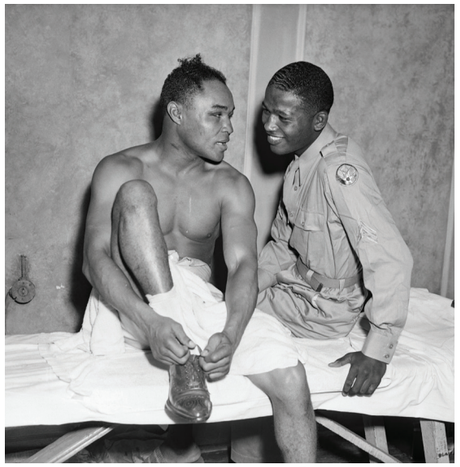
LOST FIGHT:

Sugar Ray Robinson UD 10 Henry Armstrong

» August 27, 1943, Madison Square Garden, New York

On a summer night at Madison Square Garden, 15,371 fans witnessed boxing history, a clash between fighters who Ring Magazine would later deem Nos. 1 and 2 in a special edition ranking the 80 best fighters of the last 80 years. Sugar Ray Robinson, then a 22-year-old rising star with a 44-1 record, faced his boyhood idol, the fading but legendary Henry Armstrong.

Robinson initially refused the fight, unable to bring himself to battle the man he'd worshipped as a child. Only when promoter Mike Jacobs convinced him that Armstrong desperately needed the payday did Robinson reluctantly agree. Robinson, towering over the 30-year-old "Homicide Hank," systematically outboxed his hero while deliberately holding back. The young welterweight landed clean shots but pulled his punches, clinching whenever Armstrong appeared hurt, refusing to embarrass the former champion.



Robinson's respect for Armstrong (left) was immense.

Robinson swept all 10 rounds unanimously. When a reporter suggested Armstrong might have beaten Robinson in his prime, the aging warrior offered a candid response: "I couldn't have handled Robinson on the best night I ever had." That admission from a man who simultaneously held featherweight, lightweight and welterweight titles makes us wonder: Was Armstrong being modest? Or did he recognize something transcendent in the young Robinson that even a prime "Hurricane Henry" couldn't have weathered?

Robinson would go on to become arguably the greatest boxer of all time, capturing the welterweight crown and claiming the middleweight title five times. Armstrong, despite announcing retirement after this defeat, couldn't resist one final comeback, fighting until Valentine's Day 1945, when a controversial loss to Chester Slider finally convinced him to hang up his gloves for good.

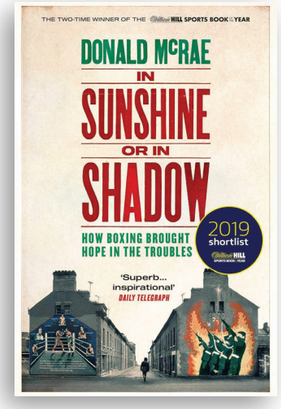
MUST-READ:

In Sunshine or in Shadow

» By Donald McRae (Simon & Schuster UK, 2020)

Donald McRae's *In Sunshine or in Shadow* delivers a masterful exploration of boxing's enduring power to illuminate the human condition during society's darkest chapters. This compelling work centers on Belfast's boxing community during The Troubles, examining how the sweet science transcended sectarian violence through the extraordinary stories of Barry McGuigan, Hugh Russell, Davy Larmour and Charlie Nash.

McRae focuses on these fighters and their legendary trainer Gerry Storey, whose Holy Family Boxing Club became a sanctuary where Catholic and Protestant boxers trained side by side. The author reveals how McGuigan's rise to world featherweight champion symbolized hope for a divided nation, while Russell's Olympic bronze medal offered proof that talent could flourish despite surrounding chaos. Larmour and Nash's journeys demonstrate the personal costs and triumphs within this unique boxing brotherhood.



The author's meticulous research shines through vivid character portraits that bring forgotten champions and overlooked warriors back into the spotlight. What sets this book apart is its unflinching examination of boxing's contradictions, how a sport built on violence became a vehicle for progress.

For boxing enthusiasts seeking deeper understanding of the sport's social significance, "In Sunshine or in Shadow" offers essential reading. McRae proves that the greatest fights have always been about more than championships; they've been about the indomitable human spirit refusing to surrender when everything seems lost. RING

PA Images

NHC
Life, Enhanced
The largest developer of destinations in the Middle East.
nhc.sa

Eubank Jr. (left) put his health at risk to make the middleweight limit.

FIGHT DOCTOR

WEIGHING THE RISKS

By Dr. Margaret Goodman

Once upon a time, boxers would step on the scale, meet their contracted weight, then climb in the ring a few hours later. Reasonable concerns were raised due to the risk of severe dehydration. As a result, the weigh-in was moved to the day before the fight to improve fighter safety by providing athletes 24 hours to rehydrate. Although the shift was well-intentioned, it has been bastardized to such a degree that it's not unusual to see fighters weigh in 36 hours before the event and then show up on fight night more than 15% above their contractual weight. That increase would turn a junior middleweight into a light heavyweight.

Weight classes serve a purpose. Does ballooning up in weight help or hinder a fighter's performance? Is it fair or dangerous? Would we see better fights if the boxers fought at the appropriate weight for their size? Can it affect a fighter's long-term health?

You don't have to look further than Chris Eubank Jr., who initially weighed 160.2 pounds and then rehydrated to 169.4 (a 6% increase) for his last bout with Conor Benn. During a recent Men's Health Podcast, he stated: "No fighter wants to make weight. It's a lot easier for some than others, but it's a horrific thing … having to dehydrate, starve and wear sweatsuits and saunas and all the things that come with having to deplete your body." Eubank, although victorious, spent two days in the hospital recovering. Yes, it was a tough bout that both competitors endured, but how much was making weight a factor?

There are many health and performance issues related to cutting weight. We've all heard the horror stories of fighters nearly passing out on the scale in an attempt to make weight by using laxatives, saunas, plastic suits, starvation, severe fluid restriction and even prohibited diuretics. This dehydration causes symptoms of headache, dizziness, lightheadedness, extreme fatigue, dark yellow/amber or even brown-colored urine, decreased skin elasticity, dry lips/gums/nostrils, low blood pressure, confusion, thirst and sunken eyes/face. On a more serious level, it can produce slowed reflexes, impaired decision-making or mental fog. The risk of arrhythmia and even heart failure increases with strain on the fighter's liver/kidneys and can result in long-term organ damage.

In a 2020 study published in the journal Sports (Basel) by Cannataro, et al., the researchers examined the acute effects of making weight in Muay Thai fighters. There was skeletal muscle damage and a significant decrease in testosterone in men after rapid weight loss that continued after the athletes regained weight! The same was seen in thyroid hormone, which took more than 15 days in men and 25 days in women to recover. Symptoms of low thyroid include fatigue, weight gain, slowed heart rate and even heart disease. The researchers felt that rapid weight loss and subsequent weight gain could be harmful, possibly causing permanent hormone changes, even if done only two to three times/year.

In 2015, ONE Championship MMA fighter Yang Jian Bing died from heart failure during a severe weight cut. UFC fighter Renan Barao fainted while cutting weight ahead of UFC 177, hit his head and was pulled from the card. Khabib Nurmagomedov had to withdraw from UFC 209 when he was hospitalized due to extreme dehydration and severe complications from a weight cut.

Gerald McClellan was known for severe weight cuts. After losing a significant amount of weight in camp for his fight against Nigel Benn in 1995, McClellan took a knee in the 10th round and collapsed after returning to his corner, losing consciousness due to a severe brain injury. It's true we don't know if McClellan's weight cut contributed to his brain bleed, but it's likely it played a role.

The brain is the last to be affected by dehydration, and fighters sometimes assume that rapidly replacing fluids by fight time – either by oral hydration or illegal IV hydration – resolves any negative effects from the weight cut.

NOT TRUE!

At least 75% of your brain is made up of water. A 2005 study by Dunning et al. using MRI showed that dehydration over a 16-hour period led to reduction in total brain volume. Less brain volume size can increase the risk of brain bleeding due to the "bridging veins" (tiny vessels connecting the brain to its covering) that undergo increased stretching when the head is struck. By fight time, a boxer's brain may still be water-deficient.

In 2017, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) acted quickly to make changes when three college wrestlers died within a six-week period. They prohibited the use of rubber suits, diuretics and saunas. A seven-pound weight allowance was added to all weight classes, and weigh-ins were to be held no more than two hours before a match. More restrictions and regulations were added later, including limits on the amount a wrestler could lose per week. Athletes underwent hydration tests to establish how concentrated their urine was – a common indicator of dehydration. Severe suspensions were given for offenses related to weight, and wrestlers would undergo body fat tests at the beginning of the year, with the lowest allowable weight at 5% body fat.

The WBC expanded weight-check rules for title fights. Fighters are required to weigh in 30 days and 7 days before a bout and to be only a certain percentage above the division weight limit. In 2019, WBC President Mauricio Sulaiman told ESPN that fighters must disclose their precise weight at the time of signing for a bout, and a 14-day weight check was added. Thirty days out, a fighter cannot be more than 10% over the division weight, 5% 14 days out and 3% seven days before the fight. Punishments can include increasing the sanctioning fee or even withdrawing the sanction altogether.

In an interview with MMA Junkie in 2018, CSAC Executive Director Andy Foster stated: "The weigh-in should not be more dangerous than the fight." When a fighter misses weight by a significant amount or it's determined that they need to move up in weight class, Foster will often add a red flag to BoxRec (the record-keeping system for commissions) noting that a boxer can no longer compete at a specific weight in his jurisdiction. And the boxer may not show up on fight night more than 10% over their contracted weight.

Some may ask why a commission or sanctioning body should have a role in weight management as long as the fighter makes weight at the weigh-in. But a boxing license is not a right, and a fighter must demonstrate they're fit to compete. That includes making weight and fighting in the appropriate weight class.

Greg Sirb, former Association of Boxing Commissions (ABC) president, current consultant and former executive director to the Pennsylvania Athletic Commission, has always been a believer of day-of-the-fight weigh-ins: "Yes, there will be a growing period of 6-8 months, but then it will be done."

Sirb, who continues to advise NCAA wrestling, notes that it works at the collegiate level: "MMA fighters are a little better than boxers, as they know how to cut weight, as many started in wrestling or jiu-jitsu. Boxers don't appreciate that 90% of the weight they gain after the weigh-in is water weight."

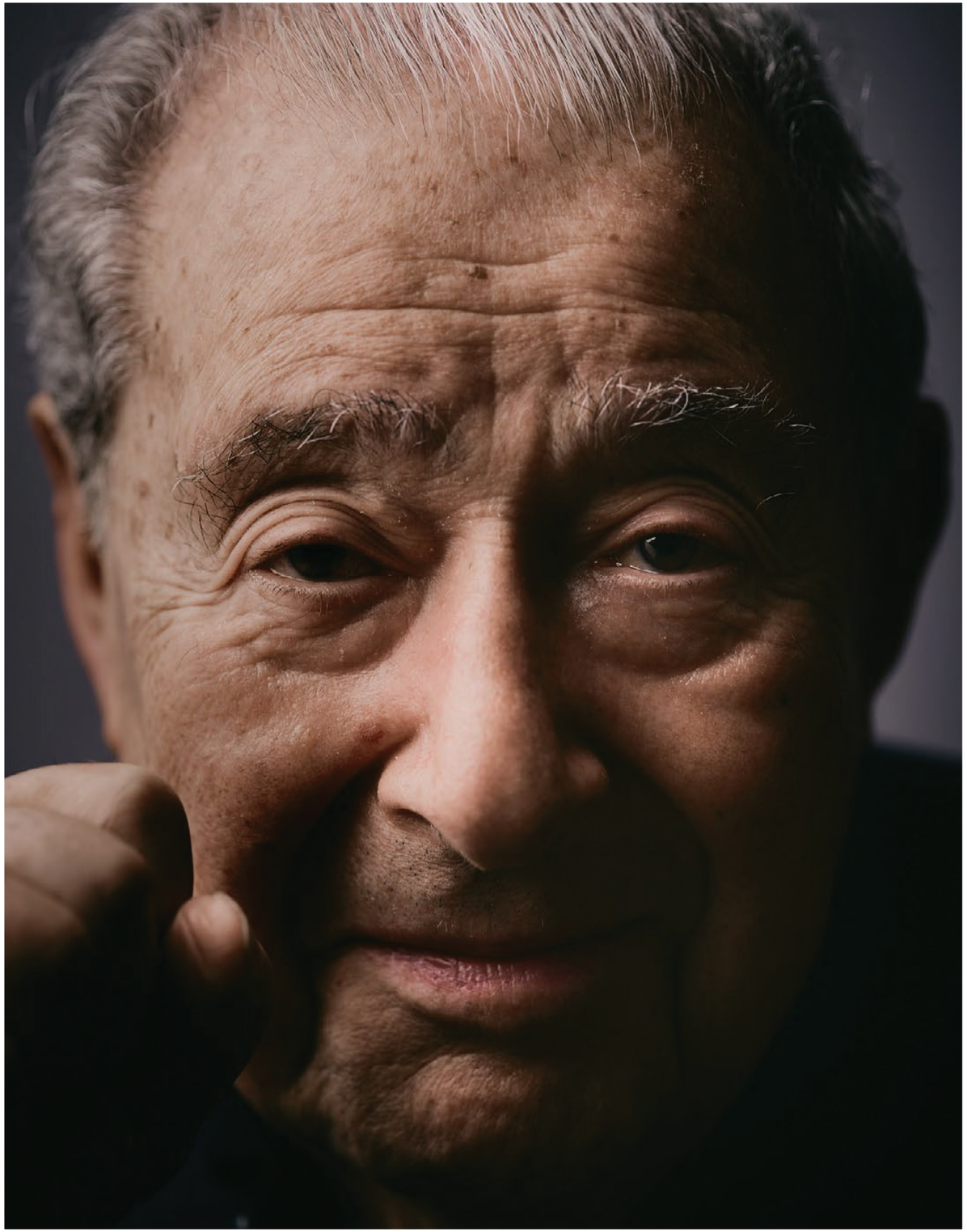
Boxers who think prohibited intravenous (IV) rehydration is the answer often don't realize that too much fluid can also be dangerous. Water intoxication or hyponatremia (low sodium) can actually cause the brain to swell and result in death. Seems as though those recommending IVs to fighters don't mention that risk!

Foster, in a presentation to the ABC in 2018, stated that inaction by regulators combined with the culture has allowed the problem of dangerous weight-cutting to grow. "Athletes are weighing in in one weight class and competing potentially two to four weight classes higher – even in some cases different weight classes from their opponent."

"Unlike any other sport, there's a lot of looking the other way to make a compromise," says Sirb. "Television or pay-per-view fights tie your hands, but 2025 is the time to solve it. But everyone has to buy in." Foster still supports day-before weigh-ins but recommends a fight day weigh-in to ensure the competitors haven't gained more than 10% of their weight from the day before.

In my humble opinion, a novel idea might be for fighters to compete in the correct weight class; not balloon up between bouts; not use training camp as a "fat farm"; never use boxing as a hobby – it's a full-time job irrespective of how many times they compete in a year. And lastly, look to fighters like Floyd Mayweather or Bernard Hopkins who always maintained their weight. RING

Dr. Margaret Goodman is a former Nevada State Athletic Commission chief physician, co-hosts the Fighter Health and Safety Podcast and is president of the Voluntary Anti-Doping Association.



© Wojtek Urbanek

THE FACE OF BOXING

Bob Arum
The End of an Era

Photographs by Wojtek Urbanek • Text by Thomas Hauser

Bob Arum was born in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn in 1931 and graduated from Harvard Law School in 1956. Six years later, he was working as an attorney in the tax division of the United States Attorney's Office in Manhattan when Floyd Patterson defended his heavyweight title against Sonny Liston. Arum was given the assignment of impounding revenue from the fight's closed-circuit television outlets. He had never seen a fight before. But he could count and the numbers impressed him.

Arum left government service in 1965 and was introduced to Muhammad Ali by football great Jim Brown. In 1966, he formed a company called Main Bouts to promote Ali's fights. The other Main Bouts equity participants were Herbert Muhammad (Ali's manager), John Ali (chief aide to Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad), Lester Malitz (an expert in the area of closed-circuit telecasts) and Brown. Their first promotion was Ali's title defense against George Chuvalo in Toronto on March 29, 1966.

The world was very different then. Lyndon Johnson was president of the United States. Only 3% of all lawyers in America were women. Gay sex was illegal in 49 out of 50 states. An African-American woman had never served in Congress. By the end of the year, 385,000 American soldiers would be fighting in Vietnam. A McDonald's hamburger cost 15 cents. Mike Tyson had yet to be born.

Arum has been boxing's most reliable constant through the six decades that followed. In 1973, he founded Top Rank. Six years later, ESPN was launched. The network was far from the colossus then that it is now. Lumberjacking and replays of Australian rules football were common programming.

Top Rank Boxing on ESPN debuted on April 10, 1980, and continued for 15 years. The series established basic cable as a significant new outlet for boxing and guaranteed that fans could watch regularly scheduled fights on a weekly basis. In 1981, Arum moved a step further, contracting for Marvin Hagler to appear three times on HBO. It was the first multi-fight contract ever for an elite fighter to appear on a premium cable television network.

In 2017, Top Rank returned to ESPN. Their contract (amended a year later) expires this summer and won't be renewed. It's unclear where Top Rank will fit into the ever-changing landscape of boxing in the future. Clearly, it won't be the dominant force that it once was.

Meanwhile, Arum will turn 94 on December 8. This is a time to acknowledge his extraordinary accomplishments.

When Top Rank's contract with ESPN ends, Arum will have promoted 2,200 fight cards and 723 world title fights in 317 cities around the world. 941 of these cards will have been televised on ESPN and 129 on HBO.

Seventy-three Hall of Fame boxers fought on cards that Arum promoted. Miguel Cotto appeared on Top Rank cards 41 times (more than any other fighter). Muhammad Ali fought for Arum 27 times.

But those numbers don't tell the entire story.

Arum didn't invent new technologies like pay-per-view, the internet and social media. But he used them well.

He was the first major player in boxing to understand and exploit the power of the Hispanic market in the United States.

He also championed boxing's lighter weight classes.

One can say that it was a no-brainer to build lucrative megafights around Hagler (20 fights for Top Rank), Ray Leonard (7), Roberto Duran (8) and Thomas Hearns (13). But Arum took 108-pound Michael Carbajal out of the 1988 Olympics and promoted him 38 times en route to a million-dollar purse in a matchup against Humberto Gonzalez.

Arum launched the extraordinary careers of Oscar De La Hoya (whom he promoted for 37 fights) and Floyd Mayweather (35). More than anyone else, he was responsible for building Manny Pacquiao (26 fights) into an international superstar. Terence Crawford (24 fights) also bears Top Rank's imprint.

It was Arum who sold the world on the possibilities inherent in a comeback by a washed-up, overweight, hamburger-eating heavyweight who hadn't fought in 10 years. When George Foreman (14 fights for Top Rank) returned to the ring in 1987, his comeback was mocked as a quixotic quest. In 1994, he knocked out Michael Moorer to reclaim the heavyweight championship of the world.

Arum also understood the importance of delegating authority and building a team. Six Top Rank employees – Teddy Brenner, Irving Rudd, Bruce Trampler, Lee Samuels, Brad Jacobs and Brad Goodman – have joined him in the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

To paraphrase Shakespeare: This is a promoter. When comes such another? RING

COMMISSIONER'S CORNER

PRELUDE TO THE BIG PAYOUT?

By Randy Gordon

At press time, Manny Pacquiao was scheduled to challenge WBC welterweight titleholder Mario Barrios on July 19 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. It is a venue in which he has fought on 15 occasions, winning 10, losing four times and fighting to one draw.

The draw came in the first of his four bouts against Juan Manuel Marquez, whom he would beat twice and suffer the third – and most severe – knockout of his career. Technically, he was also KO'd in his 12th bout – when he was 17 – but reports say it was his opponent's shoulder crashing into Pacquiao's chin that caused the knockout. His second stoppage – to Boonsai Sangsurat (AKA Medgoen Singsurat 3-K Battery) – was the result of extreme weight loss.

Pacquiao's announced comeback was a shock to many fans and even to many insiders, but the signs were there in the months after his last fight, a unanimous decision loss against Yordenis Ugas on August 21, 2021.

On several occasions, when asked by interviewers if he would ever consider a comeback, his stock answer was "you never know," followed by a broad smile.

After seeing Barrios held to a draw in his last outing by Abel Ramos (28-6-3, 22 KOs) last November, reports say Pacquiao stepped up his workouts in the gym. He made it known that if he were to return, it would not be against a rising prospect or even against a top contender, but in a world title fight. Nor was he looking to face Ring/IBF/WBA champion Jaron Ennis or The Ring's No. 1-rated welterweight, WBO beltholder Brian Norman. The view from this corner is that he had his sights on the weakest link of the three titleholders.

On December 5, 2024, the International Boxing Hall of Fame announced that Pacquiao had been selected for induction into the Class of 2025, as he fulfilled the competitor requirement of three years of inactivity. News broke in early spring of Pacquiao's intentions – at 46 years of age – to return to the ring to face Barrios, but both camps were tight-lipped when questioned about it. However, when the WBC put out its latest list of ratings, and Pacquiao was seen at No. 5, it was obvious that WBC President Mauricio Sulaiman had granted Pacquiao permission to fight for the sanctioning organization's belt. On May 21 at a press conference in Los Angeles, the fight was officially announced.

If Pacquiao should lose, especially one-sidedly, it'll be clear his competitive days are over. However, a win will drive him further. Much further!

Will he look to unify against Norman? Nope!

Will he look to unify against Ennis? Nope!

Gone are the days of Pacquiao fighting for legacy. With a record of 62-8-2 (39 KOs), world titles won in eight divisions (including three Ring championships), and dozens of other fistic accomplishments, Pacquiao is not looking for legacy. He is looking for a very large payday!

In late December 2018, at the press conference announcing Pacquiao's fight against Adrien Broner, I asked Pacquiao if he would like a shot of redemption by fighting Floyd Mayweather Jr., who outpointed him by unanimous decision on May 2, 2015.

"Of course I would," Pacquiao said. "I would like that very much," he added. "I think about a rematch all the time."

I have never forgotten Pacquiao's words. The view in this corner is that's the fight we will see next, should Pacquiao upset the odds on July 19. It'll be Pacquiao vs. Mayweather 2. The first did 4.6 million PPV buys and raked in over $400 million in revenue.

Pacquiao vs Mayweather 2 won't over-marinate like the first one did in 2015. It will happen quickly, perhaps by the end of 2025.

Pacquiao-Mayweather 2. It'll be bigger than their first fight!

Manny might want a rematch with Floyd, but does anybody want to watch it?

JOHN GURZINSKI

★★★★

Back in the summer of '84, I was the editor-in-chief of The Ring. I had a busy day in front of me.

For one, I had to write my editorial. Secondly, I had stories to edit and photos to choose for those stories.

I also had an 11 a.m. phone interview with promoter/casino owner Donald J. Trump (you may have heard of him!).

At noon, I had a lunch meeting with NBC-TV Sports Executive Producer Michael Weisman.

Following that, I had two mid-30s businessmen coming into the office to speak with me about their idea for a boxing hall of fame. An International Boxing Hall of Fame. I couldn't think of anything I wanted to do less, as the list of men who had come into my office to discuss a boxing hall of fame numbered in the dozens since I'd begun at The Ring in 1979. None of them came armed with anything more than a boring monologue, dirty clothes and mouthfuls of b.s. All they really wanted was a sponsorship check from The Ring and a cover story on themselves. All I gave them was an escort to the elevator.

Yet I kept providing each of them with an audience, hoping one day to hear something real.

So when the two guys, Don and Ed, walked into my office – the same one Nat Fleischer sat in 15 years earlier – I was prepared to listen.

When they walked in, neatly dressed, I was immediately impressed. They weren't like most of the others, who came in with gravy-stained ties and crumpled, coffee-splattered shirts.

They were as impressed with me as I was in their appearances when they said they were from Canastota, New York, some 290 miles north of my Midtown Manhattan office, and I replied, "Carmen Basilio and Billy Backus."

"You've heard of Canastota?" asked Ed. "You know of Carmen Basilio and Billy Backus?"

"I am the editor of The Ring," I replied.

We laughed.

After a few minutes of answering a few of my questions, they opened a tube. It contained blueprints.

I knew then and there that Don and Ed were the men who would get the job done.

Nearly five years later, I was chairman of the New York State Athletic Commission. I was invited by Don and Ed to cut the ribbon – alongside Basilio, Backus and Floyd Patterson – to open the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

The following year, in 1990, I stood at the podium at the IBHOF and officially introduced the Class of 1990 and the first year of inductions.

In all, 535 men and women have been inducted into boxing immortality in Canastota.

I thank those two young men – Don and Ed – who came to visit me at The Ring and for living up to their promise and erecting an eternal monument to boxing.

Yes, Don Ackerman, the IBHOF's longtime president, and Ed Brophy, its longtime executive director, believed in themselves and made their dream come true.

The last of those 535 inductees was this aging but still very active commissioner, as part of the Class of 2025.

To paraphrase Rocky: Yo, Roni! I did it!

★★★★

Several of you have sent in your questions, thoughts and rants to me. Here are a few:

NELSON TRAGLIA, Sparta, Wis. – Do you think fighters today are being rushed?

THE COMMISH: *Most definitely. Gone are the days of a fighter building his record over the course of a few years with a few dozen fights. Today, if A fighter gets to 11, 12, 13-0, you hear him say, "I'm ready for anybody!" In many cases, they get the shot – and sometimes win it.*

HECTOR AGUADO, San Juan, P.R. – How do you think the Canelo Alvarez vs. Terence Crawford fight will turn out?

THE COMMISH: *As we get closer to the fight, and after I hear all the inside scoops on each guy's training camp, I will make an official prediction. I do know both will be in the best condition of their lives. As of now, I can see Crawford handling the weight very well and giving Canelo a very rough night.*

CHRIS CASILLAS (hometown unknown) – Randy, I just read the "hometown decisions" column you wrote. You can't be serious to think this doesn't happen. You should replace the word "hometown" with "A-side." Did you not see Tank vs. Roach? [That was] clearly an A-side bias and the gutless powers that be [were] afraid to change the result to Roach by decision. There are many more examples, but you already know that.

I'm hoping my next read is more honest.

THE COMMISH: *I never said hometown decisions no longer occur. I just feel, as do many of my colleagues, that they are not as prevalent as they once were. But I do hear and feel your frustration.*

BRUCE THOMPSON, Boston – Do you think Tyson Fury will fight again?

THE COMMISH: *Absolutely! A mega-money fight against Anthony Joshua is just waiting to be made. Tyson Fury will fight again!*

Send your thoughts, questions and rants to TheCommishRandyG@gmail.com. You guys are the best boxing fans in the world. You deserve to be heard in The Ring. RING

FINISHING SHOTS

THE WARRIOR RETURNS:
Evander Holyfield was never known for taking the path of least resistance. A heart scare followed his April 1994 world title defeat to Michael Moorer and led to an official retirement and a 13-month layoff. During that time, the religiously inspired Holyfield claimed to have been restored to full health by a faith healer and committed himself to a comeback. On May 20, 1995, "The Real Deal" threw down against powerful heavyweight force Ray Mercer in Atlantic City. It was a hard-fought encounter, but Holyfield overcame a serious eye cut to deck Mercer for the first time in his career and secure a 10-round unanimous decision victory. RING

Simon Bruty

Focus on Sport

John Iacono

Focus on Sport

FIGHTLINE

BY DOUG FISCHER

Fights only last a matter of minutes, but fighters are connected to each other by chains that extend for decades – even centuries – into the past. Their bond is a lineage built face-to-face: A young prospect struggles with the skills of an aging veteran whose nose was once broken by a fighter now enshrined in the International Boxing Hall of Fame. In that way, muscle memory carries knowledge and boxers face a piece of everyone their opponent has fought, everyone those people fought, and so on.

This month we're linking two former middleweight champions with Italian roots – Vince Dundee, who was born in Sicily but raised in Baltimore, and Nino Benvenuti, Italy's most beloved boxer born in a town that became part of Slovenia after World War II.

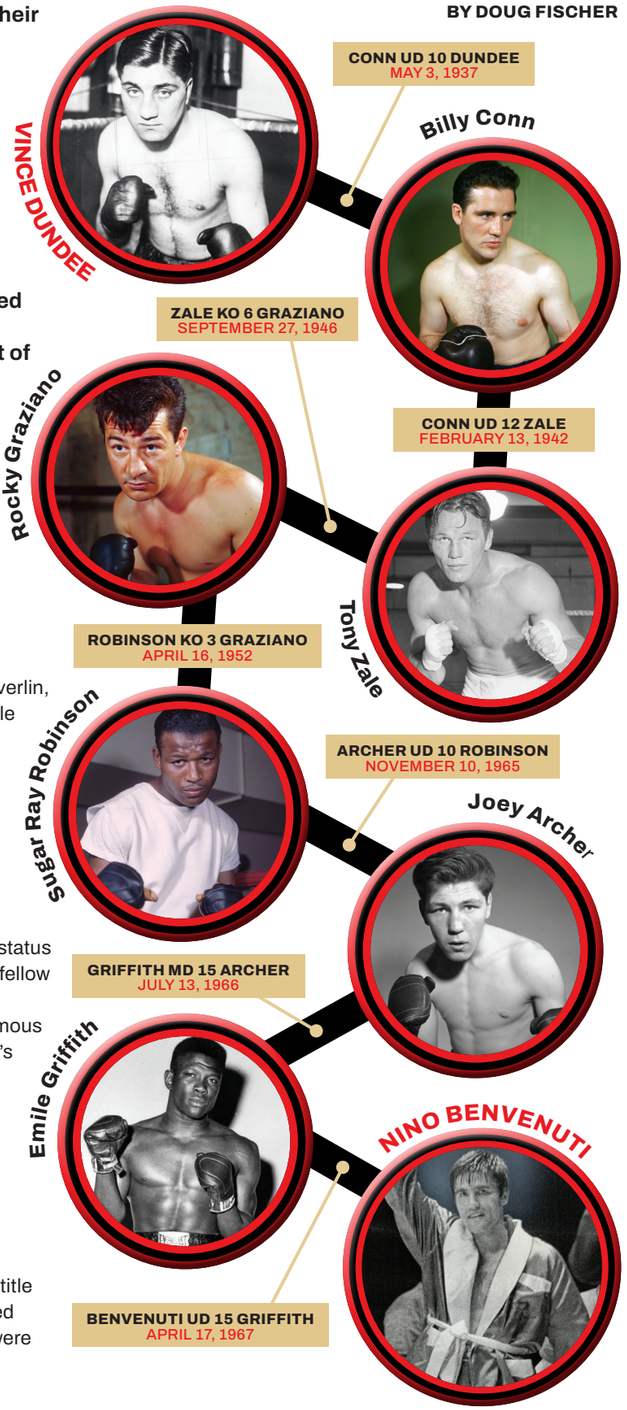
Dundee (born Vincenzo Lazzara) and older brother Joe were welterweight attractions during the early 1920s. Joe won the 147-pound title in 1927, but Vince found glory in the 160-pound division. Respected for his skills and vaunted durability (he was only stopped once in 157 bouts), Dundee earned the National Boxing Association (NBA) middleweight title with a 15-round decision over Lou Brouillard on October 30, 1933.

Dundee battled seven other world middleweight title claimants – (in order) Marcel Thil, Solly Krieger, Ken Overlin, Ben Jeby, Teddy Yarosz, Babe Risko and Freddie Steele – as well as several contenders during his 14-year pro career. He was the first native of Italy to win the NBA middleweight title.

Benvenuti, born in Izola when the Adriatic coastal town was part of Italy, is the Italian Republic's greatest middleweight. He was already a national idol on the merit of a near perfect amateur career that culminated with Olympic gold at the 1960 Rome Games, but the cerebral boxer-puncher turned pro and earned legend status in the U.S. during his fiercely contested trilogy against fellow Hall of Famer Emile Griffith in 1967 and 1968.

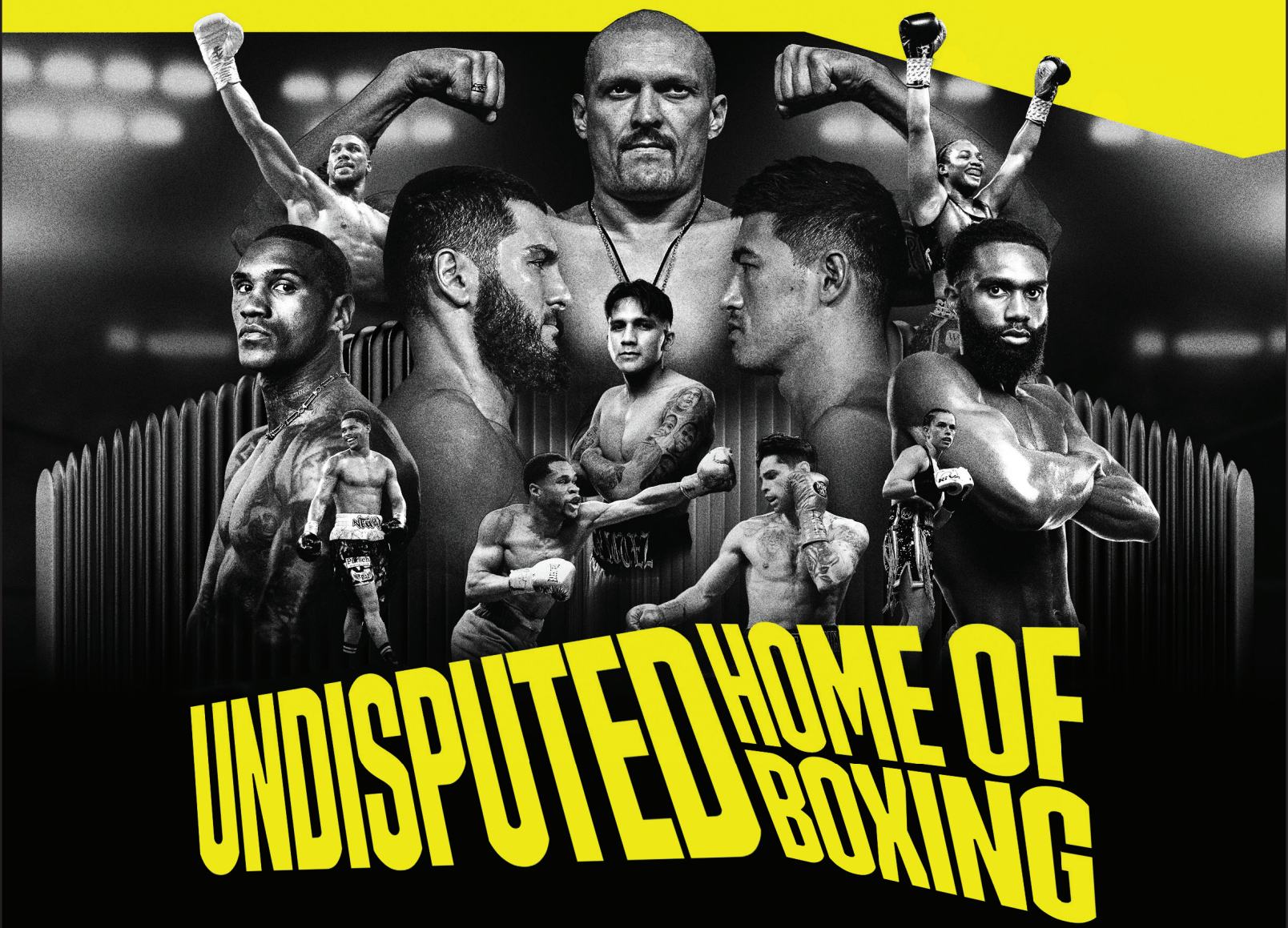
Benvenuti's first bout with Griffith, a 15-round unanimous decision for the world middleweight title, was The Ring's 1967 Fight of the Year. Benvenuti, the first Italian national to hold the Ring Magazine middleweight title, faced three other Hall of Famers – Dick Tiger, Luis Rodriguez and Carlos Monzon – during his 10-year, 90-bout pro career.

Dundee's and Benvenuti's primes are separated by 35 years, but the two are linked by five celebrated champions and Joey Archer, a popular middleweight contender who narrowly lost to Griffith in back-to-back title bouts just before Benvenuti won the belt. Archer passed away the month before Benvenuti (on April 25). Both were 87 when they died. RING



PIF
ELEVATING THE GAME
PIF supports the growth of global sport, inspiring the next generation of athletes
Learn more
pif.gov.sa

DAZN



UNDISPUTED HOME OF BOXING

185+ unmissable fights a year

The biggest names. The best promoters. All in one place.

Sign up at **DAZN.com/boxing**